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# Govt calls ...

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-escalate tensions and address underlying issues. Sir, it is also imperative that the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states in the region be respected," he stressed.

Jaishankar said developments in the region are a cause of deep concern to "all of us", and added that the conflict has continued to intensify and the security situation in the region has deteriorated significantly.

The minister emphasised that Prime Minister Narendra Modi continues to closely monitor emerging developments and the relevant ministries are coordinating to ensure effective responses.

He said the prime minister has spoken to leaders of several countries in West Asia and has received assurances that the well-being of the Indian community would be a priority for them.

"I have similarly been in close touch with my counterparts in these countries. Insofar as the United States is concerned, we have maintained regular contacts through diplomatic channels. While attempts have been made, contacts with Iran at the leadership level are obviously difficult at this time. I have, however, spoken to Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi on February 28 and March 5, 2026. We will continue these high-level conversations in the coming days," he assured the house.

Jaishankar informed Parliament about the steps taken by the government to bring back Indians and provided details of the operation of flights by several airlines to bring back those affected.

Referring to concerns on the energy front amid rising global crude oil prices, he said the government remains committed to ensuring that fully, taking into account costs and risks of the energy markets.

"For us, the interests of the Indian consumer have and will always be the overriding priority. Where required, Indian diplomacy has supported the endeavours of our energy enterprises in this volatile situation," he asserted.

On the Iranian vessel currently docked in Kochi, the minister said the Iranian side requested permission on February 28 for three ships in the region to dock at Indian ports and permission was accorded on March 1.

"IRIS LAVAN actually docked on 04 March in Kochi. The crew is currently in Indian naval facilities. We believe that this was the right thing to do and the Iranian Foreign Minister has expressed his country's thanks for this humane gesture," he said.

He noted that in view of the large number of Indians living and working in Gulf countries and a few thousand in Iran for study or employment, ensuring regional stability was critical for India. The Gulf is also central to India's energy security and trade, accounting for nearly USD 200 billion in commerce," he said.

The minister said attacks on merchant shipping have affected Indian seafarers, with casualties reported and one Indian mariner still missing.

He also informed Parliament that his ministry, as well as Indian embassies in West Asian countries, had been issuing regular advisories to Indian citizens there, asking them to avoid non-essential travel to Iran and advising those already there to remain in contact with the Indian embassy.

The Ministry of External Affairs has also set up a dedicated control room to monitor the situation and respond to requests from Indian nationals, while the Directorate General of Shipping has created a quick response team.

Meanwhile, Iran had sought India's permission for three of its ships to dock at Indian ports and the approval was granted the next day, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Monday, amid tensions in the Indian Ocean region following the sinking of an Iranian warship by the US last week.

In a statement in the Parliament, Jaishankar said one Iranian vessel, IRIS LAVAN, docked in Kochi on March 4 and its crew members are currently staying in Indian naval facilities.

It was for the first time a senior minister said that Iran requested for docking of three of its ships in Indian ports.

"The Iranian side requested permission on February 28 for three ships in the region to dock at our ports. This was accorded on March 1. IRIS LAVAN actually docked on March 4 in Kochi. The crew is currently in Indian naval facilities," he said.

"We believe that this was the right thing to do and the Iranian Foreign Minister has expressed his country's thanks for this humane gesture," Jaishankar said.

One of the three warships was IRIS Dena that was torpedoed and sunk by a US submarine on March 4.

The sinking of the Iranian frigate IRIS Dena by the US off the coast of Sri Lanka triggered concerns about the expansion of the conflict in West Asia to the Indian Ocean region.

The warship was returning home after participating in the Milan multilateral naval exercise as well as International Fleet Review hosted by India. At least 87 Iranian sailors were killed in the attack.

Another Iranian warship was allowed to dock by Sri Lanka at its eastern port of Trincomalee.

The vessel, IRIS Bushehr, had sought permission to enter Sri Lankan waters, citing an engine failure.

In his remarks, Jaishankar also said that the government is fully committed to ensure the country's energy security.

The global energy supplies have witnessed some disruptions in view of the escalating conflict in West Asia.

"In view of the implications of this conflict for our energy security, I also seek to address that particular concern. The government remains committed to ensuring that fully, taking into account the availability, costs and risks of the energy markets," Jaishankar said.

"For us, the interest of the Indian consumer has and will always be the overriding priority. Where required, Indian diplomacy has supported the endeavours of our energy enterprises in this volatile situation," he said.

The external affairs minister also presented details of the advisories issued by Indian embassies in Israel, Iran, the UAE, Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia between February 28 and March 8 in view of the situation in West

Asia.

"The conflict has continued to intensify and the security situation in the region has deteriorated significantly. We have noted that, in fact, the conflict has spread to other nations with mounting destruction and deaths," he said.

Jaishankar said normal life and economic activities in the entire region were visibly affected and, in some cases, have come to a halt.

"We, therefore, reiterated our call on March 3 for dialogue and diplomacy and spoke up for an early end to the conflict. I am confident that the House joins me in expressing our sorrow at the loss of lives," he said.

"While any development that negatively impacts peace and security in the world is deeply troubling, this ongoing conflict is an issue of particular concern for India. We are a neighbouring region and understandably, have obvious stakes in West Asia remain stable and peaceful," he said.

Jaishankar noted that one crore Indian citizens live and work in the Gulf nations.

"In Iran too, there are a few thousand Indians who are there for study and employment. The region is key to our energy security and includes many important suppliers of oil and gas," he said.

# Omar hosts ...

was also present at the event.

Congratulating the players, the Chief Minister lauded their dedication and perseverance, saying their achievement has brought immense pride to Jammu & Kashmir. He wished them continued success and encouraged them to keep striving for excellence and making the region proud on the national stage.

Among those present on the occasion were Deputy Chief Minister Surinder Choudhary; Ministers Sakina Itoo, Javed Ahmad Rana, Javid Ahmed Dar and Satish Sharma; Chief Secretary Atal Dulloo; Commissioner Secretary Youth Services & Sports Shahid Iqbal Choudhary; Director General Youth Services & Sports, JKCA administrators and members, Secretary Sports Council and other senior officers.

# Iran names ...

The war has shaken global energy markets, pushing oil prices above USD 100 a barrel and leading to tighter supplies of natural gas after Qatar turned off its production.

The younger Khamenei, who had not been seen or heard from publicly since the war started, had long been considered a contender for the post. That was even before the Israeli strike killed his father, and despite never being elected or appointed to a government position.

There appeared to be some dissension over his selection. Political figures within Iran criticised the idea of handing over the supreme leader's title based on heredity and thereby creating a clerical version of the rule of the shah, who was toppled during the 1979 Islamic Revolution. But top clerics in the Assembly of Experts likely wanted Khamenei to prosecute the war.

Khamenei, who is believed to hold views that are even more hard-line than his late father, now will be in charge of Iran's armed forces and any decision regarding Tehran's nuclear programme.

While the country's key nuclear sites are in tatters after the United States bombed them during the 12-day Israel-Iran war in June, there is still highly-enriched uranium in Iran that is a technical step away from weapons-grade levels. Khamenei could choose to do what his father never did -- pursue the bomb.

Israel has already described him as a potential target, while US President Donald Trump criticised the idea of Khamenei taking power.

"Khamenei's son is unacceptable to me," Trump has said. "We want someone that will bring harmony and peace to Iran."

The White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Trump told ABC News on Sunday he wants a say in who comes to power once the war is over; a new leader "is not going to last long" without his approval.

Iran's Revolutionary Guard issued a statement expressing support, as did the Iran-backed Lebanese militant group Hezbollah.

Top Iranian security official Ali Larjani, speaking to Iranian state television, praised the Assembly of Experts for "courageously" convening even as airstrikes continued in Tehran. He said the younger Khamenei had been trained by his father and "can handle this situation".

Regional anger grows and oil rises above USD 100 a barrel

Oil depots in Tehran smoldered following overnight Israeli strikes.

In a sign of rising regional anger, the Arab League chief lashed out at Iran for its "reckless policy" of attacking neighbours, including ones that host US forces.

Saudi Arabia's Defence Ministry said on Monday it intercepted a drone attacking the country's massive Shaybah oil field. A day earlier, the country said a military projectile fell onto a residential area and killed two people of Indian and Bangladeshi nationality.

The US military said a service member died of injuries from an Iranian attack on troops in Saudi Arabia on March 1. Seven US soldiers have now been killed.

Two US officials said the State Department will order nonessential personnel and families of all staff to leave Saudi Arabia as Iran escalates its attacks. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity pending a formal announcement. Eight other US diplomatic missions have ordered all but key staff to leave: Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates and the consulate in Karachi, Pakistan.

The war has killed at least 1,230 people in Iran, at least 397 in Lebanon and at least 11 in Israel, according to officials. Israel reported its first soldier deaths on Sunday, saying two were killed in southern Lebanon, where its military is fighting Hezbollah.

Desalination and oil facilities attacked

Bahrain accused Iran of indiscriminately attacking civilian targets and damaging one of its desalination plants, though its electricity and water authority said supplies remained online.

Desalination plants supply water to millions of residents in the region and thousands of stranded travellers, raising new fears of catastrophic risks in parched desert nations.

# India world's ...

The United States supplied 42 per cent of all international arms transfers during 2021-25, up from 36 per cent in 2016-20, it said.

Four states in Asia and Oceania -- India, Pakistan, Japan and Australia -- ranked among the 10 largest arms importers globally in 2021-25.

The main supplier to the region in 2021-25 was the US, which accounted for 35 per cent of regional arms imports. Russia accounted for another 17 per cent and China for 14 per cent.

"India was the world's second largest arms importer. Its imports decreased marginally (4 per cent) between 2016-20 and 2021-25," the SIPRI said.

"The largest share of Indian arms imports came from Russia, at 40 per cent -- a significantly smaller share than in 2016-20 (51 per cent) and almost half that in 2011-15 (70 per cent)," it said.

India is increasingly turning to Western suppliers, it said.

The report noted that Russia has remained India's main supplier for military hardware. At the same time, it said India has been buying arms from France and Israel as well.

Arms imports by Pakistan grew by 66 per cent between 2016-20 and 2021-25. China supplied 80 per cent of Pakistan's arms imports in 2021-25, up from 73 per cent in 2016-20," the report noted.

The US has further cemented its dominance as an arms supplier, even in an increasingly multipolar world, said Pieter Wezeman, Senior Researcher with the SIPRI Arms Transfers Programme.

For importers, US arms offer advanced capabilities and a way of fostering good relations, he said.

"While tensions and conflicts in Asia and Oceania and the Middle East continue to drive large-scale arms imports, the sharp increase in arms flows to European states pushed global arms transfers up almost 10 per cent," said Mathew George, Director of the SIPRI Arms Transfers Programme.

Overall, the report said the volume of major arms transferred between states increased by 9.2 per cent between 2016-2020 and 2021-2025.

"States in Europe more than trebled their arms imports, making it the biggest recipient region. Total exports by the United States, the world's largest supplier of arms, increased by 27 per cent. This included a 217 per cent increase in US arms exports to Europe," it said.

# Bank committed ...

in Srinagar and Zonal Office Jammu.

In Jammu, the event was attended by Executive Director Sudhir Gupta, Chief General Managers along with General Managers, Deputy General Managers and other senior officers, while General Managers, DGMs and other senior officers also joined the function virtually from CHQ, Srinagar.

Addressing the gathering, MD & CEO Amitava Chatterjee highlighted the Bank's consistent efforts towards promoting gender equality and financial empowerment. He said,

"At J&K Bank, we firmly believe that empowering women is not only a social responsibility but also a strategic imperative for inclusive economic growth. Women today are leading change across sectors, and it is encouraging to see their increasing representation within our own organisation as well as among our customers."

Emphasising the Bank's strong relationship with women customers, he added, "Nearly 42 percent of our clientele comprises women, which reflects the trust and confidence they repose in the Bank. We will continue to devise products, initiatives and outreach programmes that strengthen financial independence and entrepreneurial aspirations among women."

MD & CEO concluded his remarks by reciting a poem that captured the essence of how "women lead not just with their heads, but with their hearts—shaping us in every part of life, from our personal circles to our professional world."

Earlier, in her welcome speech, DGM Hafeeza Rahim said, "The year 2026 marks 115 years of International Women's Day celebrations under the theme 'Give to Gain', which highlights the importance of generosity, collaboration and reciprocal empowerment in achieving sustainable and inclusive growth. The theme reflects the larger idea that empowering women strengthens families, communities and institutions alike."

While naming Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Chairperson Salesforce India Arundhati Bhattacharya, and former MD & CEO Axis Bank Shikha Sharma as remarkable role models for women to look up to and emulate, DGM Virender Kaur remarked, "It is important for us to create opportunities for women, including in their professional lives, by providing them a supportive work environment towards building a progressive and future-ready banking system."

DGM & Zonal Head (Jammu) Aneeta Nehru presented the vote of thanks, wherein she expressed gratitude to the Bank's leadership and other colleagues for participating in the IWD celebrations. She further said, "J&K Bank has always encouraged a culture of equal opportunity, professional growth and leadership for women employees. At the same time, through focused financial solutions, we support women entrepreneurs, professionals and households in achieving greater economic self-reliance."

Notably, besides conducting many functions, the Bank has also extended support to various women-related programmes organised in J&K and other parts of the country in the wake of International Women's Day. The celebrations, therefore, reaffirm the Bank's commitment to fostering an inclusive environment and advancing women's empowerment both within the organisation and across society.

# Educational institutions

December, 2025 had announced 52-days winter vacation for degree colleges falling in the winter zones of Kashmir division.

The government had said that the degree colleges in the Kashmir Division and those in the winter zone of Jammu Division shall observe winter vacations from December-24-2025 to February-14-2026

# 30K enumerators, ...

strengthen preparations for the upcoming Census, 2027 which will be conducted digitally for the first time across the country.

The session was attended by Administrative Secretaries of various departments, senior officers of the Union Territory administration, Divisional and District administration officers and representatives of multiple government departments.

Addressing the officers, the Chief Secretary emphasised the need for coordinated and proactive preparations for the smooth conduct of the census operations. He stated that the meeting had clearly delineated the roles and responsibilities of each department and called upon all departments and field functionaries to extend full support to the census machinery so that the exercise is carried out in a systematic, transparent and efficient manner.

He also underscored the importance of public awareness and outreach, stressing that citizens must be encouraged to actively participate in the census process and provide accurate information. He observed that a successful census depends on the cooperation of both the administration and the public, and all stakeholders must work together to ensure the credibility and completeness of the data collected during this mega UT wide programme.

Speaking on the occasion, the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India, Mritunjay Kumar Narayan expressed satisfaction over the level of preparedness and the comprehensive sensitisation carried out for officers at different levels of the administration in Jammu and Kashmir. He observed that the discussions and briefings held during the session had instilled confidence that the census operations in both phases would be completed diligently and within the prescribed timelines.

Highlighting the significance of the census exercise, he said that census data plays a pivotal role in determining the share of states and Union Territories in various Finance Commission allocations and government development programmes. He noted that the census serves as the foundational dataset guiding policy planning and development initiatives for the next decade.

He urged officers and field functionaries to exercise utmost diligence while collecting information, stressing that the quality and reliability of census data are critical for ensuring evidence-based planning and objective policy outcomes. He also emphasised the importance of rigorous training for field staff engaged in the exercise, noting that a clear understanding of procedures and digital tools would ensure smooth and efficient operations on the ground.

During the session, Director Census Operations for Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh, Amit Sharma delivered a detailed presentation outlining the strategy, methodology, administrative arrangements and digital systems planned for conducting the census operations in the Union Territory.

He informed that the Census of India 2027 will be conducted in two phases across the country. The first phase will comprise the House Listing Operations (HLO), followed by the second phase of Population Enumeration.

To effectively manage the massive scale of the enumeration process, he apprised that a structured hierarchy of trainers had been envisaged by the Department. This includes a core team of National Trainers and Master Trainers who will subsequently train 614 Field Trainers. These trainers will further impart training to approximately 30,871 Enumerators and Supervisors at the Charge level across the Union Territory.

The field functionaries are scheduled to undergo specialised three-day training programmes between May 7 and May 25, 2026, equipping them with the required skills and operational knowledge before the commencement of fieldwork.

As per the operational plan, Phase-I (Houselisting and Housing Census) will begin with a 15-day self-enumeration window from May 17 to May 31, 2026, allowing citizens to submit their details digitally. This will be followed by 30 days of house-to-house enumeration throughout June 2026. The phase will focus on documenting housing conditions, household amenities and related infrastructure, which will form the statistical framework for the subsequent population enumeration phase.

Considering the unique geographic and climatic conditions of Jammu and Kashmir, Phase-II (Population Enumeration) will commence in September 2026 for snow-bound areas and in February 2027 for non-snowbound regions. This phase will collect detailed data on demographic, socio-economic and cultural characteristics of the population.

Recognising the crucial role of grassroots personnel in the census exercise, the Government has sanctioned an honorarium of ₹25,000 each for Enumerators and Supervisors, including ₹9,000 for the Houselisting phase and ₹16,000 for the Population Enumeration phase.

The Director further informed that the Census Reference Date has been fixed as March 1, 2027 for most areas, while October 1, 2026 will serve as the reference date for snow-bound regions.

The upcoming census will capture comprehensive information related to housing conditions, household amenities, assets, demographic characteristics, language, literacy, education, economic activity, migration patterns and other socio-economic indicators. Such data forms the backbone for policy formulation, planning and development programmes at the national, state and local levels.

A major highlight of the upcoming census will be digital data collection through a dedicated mobile application specifically developed for census operations. The application will be available on both Android and iOS platforms and will support multiple regional languages, including Hindi, English and Urdu in Jammu and Kashmir.

The application will also function in offline mode, enabling enumerators to collect data in areas with limited or no internet connectivity, while internet access will only be required for device registration and uploading of the collected data.

It was also highlighted that census data serves as the primary basis for delimitation and reservation of constituencies for Parliament, Legislative Assemblies, Panchayats and Urban Local Bodies, besides being extensively used by government agencies, researchers and development institutions.

Providing details of the administrative framework for census operations in the Union Territory, the Director Census Operations informed that the exercise will cover 20 districts, 207 tehsils, 6,462 villages and 78 towns, in addition to two Municipal Corporations.

He added that only enumerators registered on the Census Management and Monitoring System (CMMS) will be authorised to collect and upload data. The information will subsequently be verified by supervisors through the system to ensure accuracy, transparency and authenticity of the data collected during the enumeration process.

# Jawan goes ...

operations are underway with all available resources of the Indian Army and civil agencies being employed to locate the soldier," Army's White Knight Corps said in a post on X.

The officials said an army unit was conducting a training drill in the water body as part of routine operational preparedness.

Divers and specialised rescue equipment have been