

# Iran has no ability to enrich uranium, build ballistic missiles: Netanyahu

JERUSALEM, Mar 20 (PTI)

ISRAELI Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has claimed that Iran no longer has the capability to enrich uranium or produce ballistic missiles.

Netanyahu said, "(Ayatollah Ali) Khamenei ordered the renewal of missile and nuclear programmes and to bury them deep underground. We are acting not only to destroy the remaining missiles, a few remain, but to destroy the industries that enable the production of these programmes.

"Now, after 20 days, I can announce to you that Iran has



no ability to enrich uranium and has no ability to produce ballistic missiles," Netanyahu said in Hebrew. Khamenei was killed in a major attack by Israel and the US on February 28.

Describing Iran as "weaker than ever", Netanyahu said Israel is a regional power, "and some would say a world power". Without setting a timeline

for the ongoing joint military campaign with the US, now in its 20th day, the Israeli prime minister said the operations would continue "for as long as necessary". Netanyahu dismissed rumours of his death, saying, "I want to say I am alive and you are witnesses to that".

"Now that I have debunked this fake news, I want to give you an update: The operation is designed to remove the existential threats from the Iranian regime that has declared war against the US, Israel, and the people in Iran and shouts death to America, death to Israel, and brings death to its people," he said.

# DGCA asks airlines to avoid 9 West Asia airspaces, restrict flying below 32K ft



NEW DELHI, Mar 20 (IANS)

INDIA'S aviation regulator -- the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) -- has directed airline companies to avoid several airspaces in West Asia amid the ongoing US-Israel-Iran conflict, to ensure contingency planning as part of safety risk assessments. The regulator has asked flight operations firms to refrain from operating in the airspace of Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

However, flights over Oman and Saudi Arabia may be permitted subject to specific conditions, according to a DGCA noti-

fication. Recent military strikes by the United States and Israel on targets in Iran have created a high-risk environment for civil aviation, according to the aviation regulator.

It also added that Iran's retaliatory measures have further heightened the threat, posing serious risks to flight operations. Airlines have also been advised not to operate below FL320 (32,000 feet) in designated parts of the Saudi Arabia and Oman airspace. The regulator emphasised the need for thorough safety risk assessments and robust contingency plans to manage potential disruptions, including rerouting and diversions.

The advisory has come into effect immediately and will remain in force until March 28, unless reviewed earlier based on evolving developments.

The DGCA further directed carriers to avoid operating within the affected airspaces at all flight levels and altitudes. "Operations to airports in the region, where international carriers continue to fly, must be backed by comprehensive contingency planning to address all possible scenarios," the DGCA said.

Moreover, airlines have been asked to ensure that flight crew are updated with the latest NOTAMs (Notice to Airmen), which provide real-time information on airspace restrictions and operational conditions.

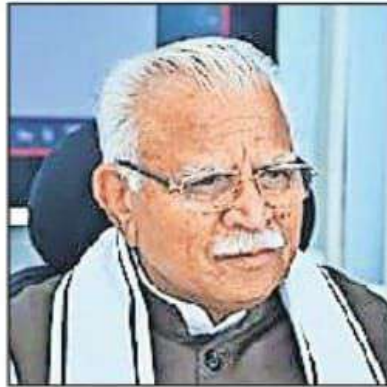
On Thursday, airline firms issued travel advisories for passengers flying to and from Delhi and other cities, warning of possible disruptions due to adverse weather conditions. IndiGo said departures and arrivals in Delhi and Bengaluru may be "slightly impacted" due to expected thundershowers, while Air India flagged persistent rain and gusty winds in the national capital and parts of north India.

# IRAN WAR: Power Minister stresses energy security

NEW DELHI, Mar 20 (PTI)

**UNION** Power Minister Manohar Lal on Friday stressed the importance of energy security amid the ongoing geopolitical tensions.

Addressing a ministerial meet at the Bharat Electricity Summit 2026, Lal called for coordinated efforts between the Centre and States to ensure affordable and efficient power generation, transmission, and distribution. "Stressing the importance of energy security amid global uncertainties, he (Lal) underlined the need to enhance per capita energy consumption and accelerate the transition towards renewable energy," a power ministry statement said.



Manohar Lal

He also noted the potential of nuclear energy as a clean energy source and termed the SHANTI Act a significant step forward.

Minister of State for new and renewable energy Shirpad Naik co-chaired the meeting.

Lal also released the Ministry of Power - Consumer Service Ratings of DISCOMS (CSR) Report, and the Distributing Utilities Ranking (DUR) Report

for FY 2024-25.

The CSR evaluates DISCOMs' performance in consumer service by setting baseline standards and expectations, including prompt and accurate metering and billing, timely and effective grievance redressal and fair, transparent tariff-setting.

# Trump, Netanyahu split on gas field attack



By Amer Madhani and Will Weissert  
WASHINGTON, Mar 20 (AP)

**PRESIDENT** Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's diverging language on Israel's decision to attack a critical Iranian gas field marks the most notable difference of opinion between the two leaders since the start of the 20-day war against Iran.

The attack by Israel on the South Pars gas field prompted Iran to retaliate against energy infrastructure in other Middle East countries. The Iranian strikes led to already elevated global energy prices further surging and spurred Gulf allies to call for Trump to rein in Netanyahu.

**Difference of opinion between the two leaders raises questions about whether they're in sync on war with Iran**

The aftermath of the strike left Trump and Netanyahu facing questions on whether they're entirely in sync in prosecuting the war that began as a closely coordinated joint attack on the

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longtime regional foe. The emergence of daylight -- or at least the appearance of it -- between the two leaders could shape the balance of the conflict and any eventual endgame.

Trump, during an Oval Office meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi, told reporters that he neither agreed



with nor approved of Israel's attack on the world's largest gas field, which is an energy lifeline for Iran. "I told him, 'Don't do that,'" Trump said of Netanyahu's decision to strike. "We get along great. It's coordinated, but on occasion he'll do something. And if I don't like it -- and so we're not doing that anymore."

Netanyahu said that Israel "acted alone" and that he's agreed to Trump's request that Israel hold off on any further attack on Iran's giant gas field. The Prime Minister also sought to downplay any space between him and Trump. "It's been said that for 40 years I've been saying that Iran is a danger to Israel and a danger to the world. That is true," Netanyahu said at a news

conference in Jerusalem. "You know who else said that? President Trump."

Netanyahu later added: "Look, I don't think any two leaders have been as coordinated as President Trump and I. He's the leader. I'm his ally. America is the leader."

Trump's first public reaction to Wednesday's strike on the Iranian gas field came several hours afterward in a fiery social media post where he also declared the US "knew nothing" about the attack before it was carried out.

## Iran threatens world tourism sites and says it is still building missiles

DUBAI, Mar 20 (AP)

**IRAN** threatened to target recreational and tourist sites worldwide and insisted it was still building missiles. Friday's

show of defiance came nearly three weeks into US-Israeli strikes that have killed a slew of Tehran's top leaders and hammered its weapons and energy industries.

Iran fired on Israel and energy sites in neighbouring Gulf Arab states as many in the region marked one of the holiest days on the Muslim calendar. Iranians were also celebrating the Persian New Year, known as Nowruz, a normally festive holiday that is more subdued this year.

With little information coming out of Iran, it was not clear how much damage its arms, nuclear or energy facilities have sustained since the war began February 28 or even who was truly in charge of the country. But Iran has showed it is still capable of attacks that are choking off oil supplies and

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Iranians attend the funeral procession of Iran's Intelligence Minister Esmail Khatib, his wife and daughter, in Tehran, Iran on Friday. (AP/PTI)

# India-China border trade via Lipulekh Pass to resume after six years

PITHORAGARH, Mar 20 (PTI)

BORDER trade between India and China through the Lipulekh Pass in Uttarakhand's Pithoragarh district is set to resume this year after a six-year hiatus. District Magistrate Ashish Bhatgai said that following directives from the Union government, preparations have begun for the trade session, which typically runs from June to September. The move comes after a No Objection Certificate (NOC) was issued by the Ministry of External Affairs.

Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri wrote to Uttarakhand Chief Secretary Anand Bardhan requesting the restoration of trade through the Himalayan pass. The letter mentions that the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Commerce and Industry have also granted clearances. Bhatgai said State Government has been asked to direct concerned departments to ensure the resumption of trade for the 2026 session.