

NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

Women's reservation law amendment should not be used as political tool: Shashi Tharoor

NEW DELHI, APR 11: Ahead of the special three-day Parliament session when the women's reservation law is expected to be amended, Congress leader Shashi Tharoor on Saturday said the proposed amendments should not be a political tool that undermines federalism and vitiates the vitality of Parliament.

In a post on X, he alleged that the government is convening a "special session" to derive political mileage ahead of state polls with an eye on delimitation before the 2029 general elections.

He also asserted that Congress is committed to a one-third reservation for women, but the same should be inclusive and fair.

Sharing his pictures at the Congress Working Committee (CWC), which met on Friday to take a stand on the proposed amendments to the women's reservation law (Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam), he said, "While the Congress has always championed the 33% quota, and



the first to introduce a Bill and pass it in the Rajya Sabha in 2013, the current government's approach raises serious alarms."

The meeting came days ahead of the three-day sitting of Parliament, during which the government will bring bills to implement the law before the 2029 parliamentary polls and increase the number of Lok Sabha seats to 816, with 273 reserved for women.

"The CWC condemned the government's unilateral and opaque push for amendments without consulting

Opposition parties. The party flagged that rushing a delimitation exercise alongside the bill could have dangerous consequences for the democratic balance of our states, particularly in the South and Northeast," he noted.

Tharoor said many Congress leaders highlighted that the government originally delayed implementation until after the Census.

"Now, a 'special session' is being used for political mileage ahead of state polls and with an eye on delimitation before the 2029 general

election.

"The Indian National Congress remains committed to one-third reservation for women, but it must be inclusive and fair. The Amendment Bill should not be a political tool that undermines federalism and vitiates the vitality of Parliament as a deliberative body," the Congress leader said.

The Congress on Friday accused the Narendra Modi government of playing politics in the name of women's reservation law and asserted that the proposed delimitation exercise linked to it was "not constitutional" and could have "grave consequences" that warrant thorough deliberation after the ongoing assembly polls.

During the CWC meeting, party chief Mallikarjun Kharge had said he would now call a meeting of top leaders of all opposition parties, most likely on April 15, to discuss and formulate a joint strategy for the "special session" of Parliament from April 16 to 18. (PTI)

US Vice President Vance arrives in Pak for crucial peace talks with Iran

ISLAMABAD, APR 11: US Vice President JD Vance arrived in Pakistan on Saturday to hold crucial peace talks with an Iranian delegation led by Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, aimed at ending the conflict in West Asia.

Vance was received at the airport by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar and Army chief Asim Munir at the Nur Khan Air Base.

He was accompanied by the US President's special envoy Steve Witkoff and Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner.

Before he departed for Pakistan, Vance said he was looking forward to the negotiation and hoped that it would be "positive".

"As @POTUS said, if the Iranians are willing to negotiate in good faith, we're certainly willing to extend the open hand. If they're going to try to play us, then they're going to find that the negotiating team is not that receptive," Vance had said before boarding the plane.



The Iranian delegation, led by its Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, along with Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, arrived early on Saturday.

The talks are taking place amid a two-week halt in the US-Israeli war on Iran, which began with the former launching attacks on the latter on February 28.

Earlier, expressing hope that the two sides would engage constructively, Ishaq Dar reiterated Pakistan's desire to continue facilitating the parties towards reaching a lasting and durable solution to the conflict in West

Asia, according to the statement issued by the Foreign Office.

The upcoming negotiations are being closely watched globally, as their success or failure could have far-reaching implications for West Asia's security, global energy markets, and international diplomacy. (PTI)

Homebuyers 'fraud' case: ED seizes over Rs 6 crore cash during raids against Delhi realty company

NEW DELHI, APR 11: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has seized Rs 6.3 crore in cash and jewellery worth Rs 7.5 crore following searches against a Delhi-based real estate company accused of defrauding homebuyers and currently undergoing insolvency proceedings, officials said on Saturday.

The action under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) was launched on Friday and 10 premises of former directors, promoters and associated entities of the company — Earth Infrastructures Ltd. (EIL) — in Delhi and Gurugram were covered.

The company, according to official records, has been undergoing a corporate insolvency resolution process (CIRP) since June 2018.

According to the ED officials,



the money laundering case against the former directors and promoters of the company was initiated after taking cognisance of five Delhi Police (Economic Offences Wing) FIRs, apart from a complaint filed by the Serious Fraud Investigation Office (SFIO), the investiga-

tion arm of the Ministry of Corporate Affairs.

The ED seized Rs 6.3 crore in cash and jewellery valued at Rs 7.5 crore, besides some silver bullion and luxury watches during the searches, the officials said. The group and its associated companies launched multiple real estate

projects under the 'Earth' brand across Delhi-NCR and Lucknow. Their major projects include Earth Towne, Earth Sapphire Court, Earth Copia, Earth Techone, Earth Iconic, Earth Titanium, Earth Elacasa, Earth Gracia and Earth Skygate.

The accused entities collected Rs 2,024.45 crore from more than 19,425 homebuyers and investors by promising "timely" delivery of residential and commercial units along with assured returns, the ED said.

However, despite collecting "huge" advances, projects were either not completed or buyers were not given possession. The funds were diverted for the acquisition of land in Gurugram, Delhi and Rajasthan or routed to shell companies, the agency claimed. (Agencies)

Four astronauts return after historic lunar flyby, NASA now eyes landing on moon

WASHINGTON, APR 11: Amid claps and cheers, four astronauts of NASA's Artemis-II mission splashed down in the Pacific ocean after a historic flight to the moon — the first by humans in more than 50 years.

"The path to the moon is open but the work ahead is greater than the work behind," Amit Kshatriya, Indian-origin NASA Associate Administrator told a press conference shortly after the Artemis-II crew returned to earth off the coast of San Diego at 8:07 eastern time on Friday.

The lunar flyby mission involving Commander Reid Wiseman, pilot Victor Glover, Christina Koch and Canada's Jeremy Hansen was the first journey to the moon since the Apollo 17 mission in December 1972 when Eugene Cernan and Harrison Schmitt spent three days exploring the lunar surface.

Rick Henfling, the flight director, said the Artemis II astronauts are "happy and healthy and ready to come home to Houston."

Artemis II was the first crewed mission to utilise NASA's Space Launch System rocket and Orion crew module — demonstrating that the agency's equipment can propel astronauts out of Earth's orbit and bring them safely home.

"Yesterday, flight director Jeff Radigan said we had less



than a degree of an angle to hit after a quarter of a million miles to the moon," Kshatriya told reporters.

"And their team hit it. This is not luck; that is 1,000 people doing their job," he said.

The mission flew 700,237 miles; its peak velocity was 24,664 m.p.h.; and the flight had an entry range of 1,957 miles but landed within one mile of its target, Henfling said.

NASA now aims to land humans on the moon where the space agency also plans to set up a habitat that would be the launchpad for future missions to Mars and beyond.

It was a triumphant homecoming for the crew of four whose record-breaking lunar flyby revealed not only swaths of the moon's far side — never seen before by hu-

man eyes but a total solar eclipse.

They emerged from their bobbing capsule into the sunlight one by one.

Henfling said his team 'breathed a sigh of relief' once the side hatch opened on the Orion Integrity after it splashed down in the Pacific Ocean.

"We all breathed a sigh of relief once the hatch opened up, that's when we brought the team in," he said.

"We said a few words to the flight controllers, and then we turned around to the families and waved and gave them a thumbs up, and we all watched as each of their four astronauts got out of the spaceship and were hoisted up onto the helicopters. It was a great day," he added.

Henfling said his team felt "anxiety" as the four astro-

nauts re-entered the Earth's atmosphere, but felt confident in all their training leading up to the history-making lunar mission.

NASA said the Artemis III mission is "right around the corner" following its history-making journey around the moon.

"The next mission is right around the corner, and you know, we'll take the lessons learned from Artemis II," Henfling said.

"We learned a bunch on how to fly people in space, both from vehicle operations, but also from how to run a control room with a deep space mission. And when the time is right, we'll get back into specific training, and we've got a core group of about 30 flight directors, and they're all extremely capable."

Stalin accuses Centre of trying to use women's quota as 'weapon,' slams EPS over delimitation

CHENNAI, APR 11: Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin has strongly criticised the Centre over the women's reservation and accused it of trying to use it as a "weapon" to tackle the opposition before taking up the delimitation exercise based on population.

"The Union government is not concerned about implementing reservations for women. If their concerns were genuine, they could have done it right away. Rather than doing that, the BJP-led Centre is thinking of using it as a weapon to tackle opposition and take up the delimitation exercise based on population," he told PTI in an interview. "Hence, the women's reservation must be implemented immedi-



ately without showing delimitation as a reason," the DMK president added.

Expressing apprehensions on the proposed delimitation exercise, the CM said it was the DMK that raised the first voice asserting the rights of the state after realising that Tamil Nadu would be affected by the proposed exer-

cise. He also attacked his rival and AIADMK chief Edappadi K Palaniswami over the delimitation issue.

Recalling efforts made by the DMK to raise the issue of population-based delimitation, he said an all-party meeting and a meeting of CMs under the auspices of the Joint Action Committee

seeking fair delimitation were convened. It sought to freeze delimitation for 25 years and stick to it based on the 1971 Census population.

"We urged the union government that states which successfully implemented population control programmes must not be punished," he added.

The party came up with "Tamil Nadu poradam, Tamil Nadu vellum" (Tamil Nadu will struggle, Tamil Nadu will win) and this is DMK's stand, he said.

"However, Palaniswami, who is seeking votes for the entry of the BJP through the backdoor, has till date been mute over delimitation, and this is a betrayal of the people of Tamil Nadu." (Agencies)

Congress questions 'self-declared Vishwaguru's huglomacy' as Pak plays mediator between US, Iran

NEW DELHI, APR 11: The Congress on Saturday questioned the government's "failure" to prevent Washington from according Islamabad the role of a mediator between the two warring countries despite New Delhi's diplomatic outreach to isolate it following the April 2025 Pahalgam attack.

This raises serious questions about "the self-declared Vishwaguru's huglomacy", said Congress general secretary, communications, Jairam Ramesh, alluding to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The Congress leader's remarks came shortly before US Vice President JD Vance arrived in Pakistan to hold crucial talks with an Iranian delegation led by Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf aimed at ending the conflict in West Asia.

In a post on X, Ramesh said the US-Iran meeting is beginning today in Islamabad and the entire world, including India, is hoping that this is the beginning of a durable peace process between the two countries "that will not get derailed by Israel's continuing aggression in its neighbourhood".

"But serious questions about the substance and style of the self-declared Vishwaguru's huglomacy arise — How has Pakistan managed to carve out a new role for itself despite its role in the dastardly Pahalgam terror attack of April 2025 and the diplomatic engagement India mounted to isolate it following the attacks?" he asked.

"This failure is especially damning because the Dr Manmohan Singh Government had very effectively isolated Pakistan after the

Mumbai terror attacks in November 2008," he said.

Ramesh further asked, "How has India allowed the US to accord Pakistan this new role even after the Namaste Trump, Howdy Modi, and Phir Ek Baar Trump Sarkar campaigns of Mr. Modi and his cheerleaders?" He alleged that India also agreed to a "very clearly one-sided" trade deal where it gave much more than what it got and yet the Modi government failed to gain any leverage with the US.

"Why didn't India as the current President of BRICS+ launch any peace or mediation initiative — especially since Iran, the UAE, and Saudi Arabia are members of the BRICS+? "What has India gained from its calibrated capitulation to China in the past eighteen months — especially in view of China's pivotal role in Pak-

istan's response to Operation Sindoor and its continued propping up of Pakistan?" the Congress leader asked. Peace in West Asia must return quickly, Ramesh said.

"The Strait of Hormuz must once again revert to the situation that prevailed before the US-Israel assault on Iran began on Feb 28th — a mere two days after Mr. Modi had completed a most ill-advised and ill-timed visit to Israel," he said. The US-Iran talks are taking place amid a two-week halt in the war, which began with Washington and Tel Aviv launching attacks on the Islamic Republic on February 28. The war has caused oil prices to spiral due to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, a key shipping route through which 20 per cent of the world's energy is transported. (Agencies)

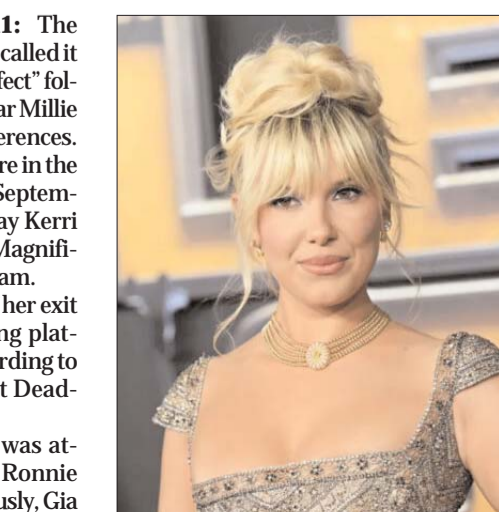
Netflix leaves 'Perfect' after Millie Bobby Brown's exit

LOS ANGELES, Apr 11: The streaming platform Netflix has called it quits on the upcoming film "Perfect" following the exit by Hollywood star Millie Bobby Brown over creative differences.

Brown was supposed to feature in the film, which was announced in September 2025. The actor would essay Kerri Strug, a member of the 1996 "Magnificent Seven" USA gymnastics team.

Following the recent news of her exit from the project, the streaming platform has scrapped the film, according to the entertainment news outlet Deadline.

Filmmaker Cate Shortland was attached to direct the film, with Ronnie Sandahl as screenwriter. Previously, Gia



Coppola was directing the project until his exit.

The film was a biopic on Strug, who is known for her performance at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics, where she secured the women's gymnastics team gold medal for the USA by vaulting on a severely injured ankle. The film was set to be produced by the actor under her production banner, PMCA, alongside Nik Bower of Riverstone Pictures and Thomas Benski of Magna Studios.

Brown will next feature in "Enola Holmes 3", which is directed by Philip Barantini. She will also appear in "Just Picture It", directed by Lee Toland Krieger and an adaptation of her novel "Nineteen Steps". (PTI)