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## Expanding permanent category with veto critical to UNSC reform: India

"There have been instances in the past where elected members have created hurdles by exercising their effective veto on Council products only to serve their narrow vested interests," he said.

Harish also pointed out to calls for restraining the veto, as he referred to a resolution adopted in the UN General Assembly in 2022 with the aim of convening a formal meeting of the 193-member UN body to hold a debate within 10 days of a permanent UNSC member exercising its veto power.

"However, this has not been an effective deterrent," Harish said, adding that since the adoption of the resolution, 24 vetoes were cast on 20 draft resolutions. He added that seven draft resolutions were vetoed in 2024, the highest since 1986.

"The UN membership has also witnessed the restraint of the two permanent members who have not cast a veto for over three and a half decades. Permanent members exercise veto many times on the basis of their own national considerations.

"No limits can be effectively considered for imposition unless there are enabling provisions in the UN Charter, which paradoxically need a Charter amendment and hence again subject to a veto!" he pointed out.

For decades, Pak has orchestrated drugs into J&K to fund terrorism: LG

ace," he said.

"I firmly believe when society stands united behind a cause, the law becomes a thousand times stronger. We must build a society where the dealer fears law, and the one who breaks free from drugs feels proud of themselves, their family, their society, and their government," he added.

"History has proved that organised societies drive change and women's power plays a crucial role. This fight belongs to mothers & sisters, elders, youth, teachers, panchayats, athletes, and elected representatives alike. It is not the job of just one department. Defeating addiction is our collective responsibility," he said.

He called upon every panchayat and ward to form women's vigilance committees.

"Women are the frontline of this war. You know where the household money goes. If anyone in the family showing symptom of addiction, don't hide it. Don't call him a criminal. Call him a patient. But that patient needs society's help, not just four walls," he said.

He directly addressed the youth and said that drugs were not cool but they were slave to drugs and drug dealers.

"Channel your energy into sports fields, art, and in study. In schools and colleges, we will make drugs a symbol of cowardice, not cool. Treatment, identification, and rehabilitation will be our priority," he said.

The LG emphasised that each drug de-addiction centre must be genuine and equipped with all necessary resources. "Strict monitoring of these centres is essential. If any centre is found operating illegally or causing harm to society and the youth, it must be shut down within 24 hours without any hesitation, irrespective of how influential the individual running it. No one should be spared. Action is already underway against all such centres," he said.

He directed police officials to break drug supply chains, list all Ramban drug traffickers at police stations and dismantle drug networks.

"The time for silence for society is over. Our divisional and district administration have prepared a comprehensive multi-pronged strategy covering every ward and panchayat. This fight is ours, all of us. If we fail today, future generations won't forgive us. Let us make a pledge today that no drug dealer will find shelter in our village or our street. Every addict will be guided toward healing. Every young person's energy will be channelled toward purpose," he said.

On the occasion, Sinha administered the 'anti-drug pledge and flagged off a bike rally. A series of awareness programmes inspired citizens to take an active role in the crusade against narcotics.

## Pak should realise conflict brings only destruction: Farooq

Pakistan should put an end to conflict, Abdullah told reporters on the sidelines of an Army event at the Jammu and Kashmir Light Infantry (JAKLI) regiment at Rangreth.

"We hope our neighbour realises that nothing can be achieved through conflict. Conflict only brings destruction. They should understand that there has been a long time and they should put an end to it," Abdullah said.

"I pray to God to bestow success at every place to this unit and get us rid of the wars. I pray that there is peace in the entire world so that we prosper," he added.

## Drug peddlers' property demolished

the authorities concerned in the morning. Officials said these properties were already attached by the authorities under the NDPS Act earlier this year.

"Not only were these properties raised from proceeds of narcotics trade, these were built on state (government) land," the officials added.

## CBSE announces results for class 10 board exams

Wednesday with 93.70 per cent of students passing the test.

Last year, the total pass percentage was 93.66 per cent. Officials said 94.99 per cent of girls cleared the exam, with 1.3 percentage points higher than the pass percentage of boys.

"A total of 55,368 students have scored above 95 per cent marks while 22,1574 students have scored above 90 per cent," an official said.

More than 1.47 lakh candidates have been placed in the 'compartment' category. The number this year is slightly less than that of last year, the officials said.

This time, more than 24.71 lakh candidates appeared for the exam which was conducted at 8,074 centres.

## WPI inflation rises to 38-month high of 3.88 pc

other commodity prices, we expect WPI inflation to rise further in the coming months.

The high WPI inflation in March reflects elevated global commodity prices and the impact of the energy price shock since the beginning of the US-Israel-Iran conflict on February 28.

WPI inflation was 2.13 per cent in February, and 2.25 per cent in March last year.

"Positive rate of inflation in March 2026 is primarily due to increase in prices of crude petroleum & natural gas, other manufacturing, non-food articles, manufacture of basic metals and food articles, etc.," the industry ministry said in a statement.

According to the latest WPI data, inflation in the fuel and power basket spiked to 1.05 per cent in March, from a deflation of 3.78 per cent in February.

Inflation in crude petroleum surged to 51.57 per cent

during March, against a deflation of 1.29 per cent in the previous month.

Manufactured products inflation rose to 3.39 per cent in March, from 2.92 per cent in February.

Barclays, in a research note, said that March WPI is the sharpest month-onmonth increase seen since August 2023.

"As global energy prices stay elevated and eventually trickle to other commodity prices, we expect WPI inflation to rise further going ahead,"

Barclays said, adding that it expects RBI to persist with a pause in interest rates through 2026.

During March, the pace of hike in food articles prices, however, eased to 1.90 per cent, from 2.19 per cent in February.

In vegetables, inflation softened to 1.45 per cent in March, against 4.73 per cent in February.

WPI inflation in FY26 averaged at 0.7 per cent, lower than the 2.3 per cent average seen in FY25.

Bank of Baroda Economist Sonal Badhan, in a note, said that going forward, if international oil prices remain elevated, then it may impact overall WPI in the coming months.

Global crude oil prices surged to USD 122/barrel early in March, driven by the ongoing conflict in West Asia and associated disruptions to global energy supply chains. The prices were hovering around USD 75/barrel before the conflict.

"If a peace deal is not reached soon, then a prolonged war can have impact on domestic fuel inflation. Pressure on the rupee may also exert some upward pressure," Badhan said.

The government, on March 26, reduced excise duty by Rs 10 per litre on both petrol and diesel to ensure that fuel retailers do not pass on the higher crude oil price to consumers.

The excise duty cut decision was taken in response to the steep and rapid rise in international crude oil prices, which had surged from approximately USD 70 per barrel to around USD 122 per barrel over the month - an increase of nearly 75 per cent in under four weeks, driven by the ongoing conflict in West Asia and associated disruptions to global energy supply chains.

Consumer price index-based retail inflation rose 3.4 per cent in March compared to 3.21 per cent in the preceding month, mainly due to an uptick in certain food items, data released earlier this week showed.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in its first bi-monthly monetary policy earlier this month kept benchmark policy rates unchanged at 5.25 per cent.

Omar seeks collective INDIA bloc response to proposed delimitation bill

made to benefit a single party or its supporters."

"The manner in which seats were allocated here, the way their constituencies were delineated, the way their boundaries were drawn, and the way certain voters were shifted from one constituency to another - the objective was to somehow ensure that the BJP and its allies would benefit," he said.

"If this Bill is being introduced with the sole intent that the ultimate beneficiary should be the BJP and not the common voter, then that is something we have to see. But let us discuss it first today, and let the India bloc prepare its response, then we will talk," he added.

To a question about the industrial incentive policy in the Union territory, which expired in September last year, the chief minister said the government is working on bringing a new incentive policy.

"We want that in the true sense, the policy should work. Otherwise, we give incentives from above, but at the ground level, there is no benefit from it. Investment doesn't come, factories aren't set up," he said.

Abdullah said the department is trying to find out what the experience of the people who set up their units has been and what kind of changes they want in the policy.

"It is also trying to find out from those who want to set up industries here, what kind of policy they would want. We will mix these two. By combining these two things, an attractive policy will be brought from the Industries and Commerce Department, which I hope will give a boost to industry here," he said.

Take 9 pledges on health, saving water: Modi to people

Listing his priorities, he said his first request was about water conservation and better water management, followed by appeals for tree plantation under the 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' (One tree in the name of mother) campaign, cleanliness in public and religious places, strengthening local products through "Vocal for Local," promoting domestic tourism, adopting chemical-free natural farming, encouraging healthy eating with millets and reduced oil consumption.

Modi also urged people to embrace yoga and fitness, and to nurture service.

"If we move forward with honesty and determination on these nine resolutions, we can rapidly progress towards a developed Karnataka and a developed India," he said while addressing a gathering at the Adichunchanagiri Mahasamsthana Math at Mandya.

Govt orders shifting of offices to Srinagar from May 4

the route at multiple places including Hajjar Kotli, Udhampur, Chenani, Ramban, Ramsu, Banihal, and Qazigund, with necessary instructions to be issued by the health and medical education department.

Employees have been instructed not to occupy government or municipal accommodations without proper allotment, though they may retain Jammu accommodations for family use under prescribed conditions. Ration counters will also be established in Srinagar for move employees.

A uniform Special Move Travelling Allowance of Rs 25,000 has been sanctioned for employees undertaking the move within the stipulated timeline, while advance salary for April will be drawn on April 29.

The order also specifies that leave during the move period will be granted only under exceptional circumstances, with three days of special casual leave allowed for Jammu-based employees opting for it.

The general administration department will establish the summer secretariat in Jammu, while all departments have been directed to detach attached staff before April 27. Accommodation arrangements in Srinagar will be handled as per past practice.

Office timings upon reopening in Srinagar have been fixed from 9.30 am to 5.30 pm for civil secretariat and departments within its premises, and from 10 am to 4.30 pm for offices outside, observing a six-day week.

Oppn favours women's reservation, not delimitation amendment: Kharge

Samajwadi Party, RJD, CPI and CPI-M were present at the meeting.

Besides Kharge and Rahul Gandhi, the other leaders at the meeting included DMK's T R Baalu, RJD's Tejashwi Yadav, Trinamool's Sagarika Ghosh, Shiv Sena (UBT) leaders Sanjay Raut and Arvind Sawant, and NCP-SCP's

Spriya Sule, with Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav joining virtually.

CPI leader Annie Raja, CPI-M's Nilotpal Basu, AAP leader Sanjay Singh, Independent MP Kapil Sibal, IUML's E T Mohammed Bashir and RSP's N K Premchandran also attended the meeting, other than Congress general secretaries K C Venugopal and Jairam Ramesh.

Jairam Ramesh said the manner in which the Delimitation Commission is functioning, "it is clear that it has become a tool to win majority for the ruling party."

"We are totally against the delimitation move. Women's reservation should be implemented, but we are totally against delimitation," he said.

Kharge had earlier in the day convened a meeting of Congress's parliamentary strategy group, where the leaders discussed both issues in detail after the government on Tuesday circulated bills related to the women's quota law and delimitation among MPs.

Notably, the Congress has alleged that when the intent behind a bill is "mischievous" and its content "devious", the extent of damage to parliamentary democracy is enormous.

The Budget session of Parliament has been extended, and a special three-day sitting of the House has been convened from April 16 to 18, during which amendments to the 'Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam', more commonly known as the Women's Reservation Act, will be brought for its implementation in 2029.

The number of Lok Sabha seats will be increased to up to 850 from the current 543 to "operationalise" the women's reservation law before the 2029 parliamentary polls, following a delimitation exercise to be carried out based on the last published census.

According to the draft Constitution amendment bill, which will be introduced in the upcoming special sitting of Parliament, seats would also be increased in the state and Union Territory assemblies to accommodate 33 per cent reservation for women.

## Boat sinks in sea, 250 feared missing

UNHCR said the disappearance reflected the protracted displacement of Rohingya people and the absence of durable solutions.

Thousands of Rohingya, Myanmar's persecuted Muslim minority, risk their lives every year fleeing repression and civil war in their country. They travel by sea, often aboard makeshift boats.

The Rohingya on board this latest boat were likely leaving huge camps in Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar, where more than a million refugees forced to flee Myanmar's western state of Rakhine live in squalid conditions.

UNHCR said ongoing violence in Rakhine state has made the Rohingyas' safe return to Myanmar uncertain, and limited humanitarian assistance, restricted access to education and employment in refugee camps, continue to push vulnerable Rohingya refugees to choose risky sea journeys, often based on false promises of higher wages and better opportunities abroad.

Rakhine state has been the scene of fierce fighting between the military and the Arakan Army, an ethnic minority rebel group, over control of the territory. The exact circumstances surrounding the latest incident were unclear, but preliminary information indicated that the vessel was carrying some 280 people and left Bangladesh on April 4.

The Bangladesh Coast Guard (BCG) said one of its ships, which was on the way to Indonesia, managed to rescue nine people from the sea, including one woman, on April 9.

"The Bangladeshi flag carrier M.T. Meghna Pride... spotted several people floating in the sea using drums and logs and rescued them from deep waters near the Andaman Islands," BCG spokesman Lieutenant Commander Sabir Alam Sujan said.

Rafiqul Islam, one of the survivors, said that he was lured on to the boat by traffickers who promised him a job in Malaysia.

"A number of us were kept in the holding area of the trawler, some died there. I was burned by oil that spilled from the trawler," said Rafiqul, 40, adding that the vessel travelled for four days before it capsized.

"We floated for nearly 36 hours before a ship rescued us from deep water."

Relatively affluent Malaysia is home to millions of migrants from poorer parts of Asia, many of them undocumented, working in industries including construction and agriculture.

But sea crossings, facilitated by human trafficking syndicates, are hazardous and often lead to overloaded boats capsizing.

The UNHCR said the latest incident reflected the "dire consequences of protracted displacement and the absence of durable solutions for the Rohingya".

"This tragedy is a reminder of the efforts urgently needed to address the root causes of displacement in Myanmar and create conditions that would allow Rohingya refugees to return home voluntarily, safely and with dignity," it said.

The Andaman Sea stretches along the western shores of Myanmar, Thailand and the Malay Peninsula.

Last year, the UNHCR said that 427 Rohingyas were feared dead at sea in two shipwrecks off the Myanmar coast in May.

## Samrat Choudhary sworn in as Bihar chief minister

was a deputy chief minister and held the crucial home portfolio Choudhary, the newly appointed chief minister, who joined the BJP in 2017, was named the legislative party leader on Tuesday in the presence of top functionaries like BJP chief Nitin Nabin and Union minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, whom the parliamentary board had named as "central observer" for the transition.

His Cabinet colleague Vijay Kumar Choudhary has been a member of the Bihar assembly since 1982 and has held various ministerial positions, as well as that of House speaker earlier.

Yadav has been representing the Supaul assembly seat since 1990. In the previous NDA government in the state, he was in charge of the power department.

## Registration begins; J&amp;K Bank enrolls 6,000 pilgrims on day 1

derbal - on July 3 and will conclude on Raksha Bandhan on August 28.

Reaffirming its pivotal role in facilitating one of the country's most revered pilgrimages, the J&K Bank has commenced registration for the annual yatra across the country, drawing an overwhelming response from devotees on the opening day.

The bank registered nearly 6,000 yatris on day 1, reflecting strong enthusiasm and deep-rooted faith among pilgrims preparing to undertake the sacred journey to the holy cave shrine.

A heavy rush was witnessed at designated branches nationwide as devotees queued up to secure their yatra permits. The registration process is being carried out through 110 identified branches of the bank on a first-come, first-served basis, in line with guidelines issued by Shri Amar-

nathji Shrine Board.

Speaking on the occasion, Managing Director and CEO Amitava Chatterjee reiterated the bank's commitment to ensuring a seamless experience for pilgrims. He stated that from registration to banking support during the pilgrimage, the institution remains dedicated to facilitating yatris at every stage of their spiritual journey.

To streamline the process, dedicated help desks have been established at all participating branches, while staff members have undergone prior training to assist devotees efficiently and ensure a hassle-free experience.

The registration is being conducted through Aadhaar-based biometric eKYC authentication in real time, with system-generated Yatra permits issued via the Shrine Board's official portal.

As per the prescribed norms, intending pilgrims must submit a valid Compulsory Health Certificate (CHC) issued by authorized medical institutions along with the requisite fee to obtain the permit.

With a robust response on the first day itself, officials expect registration numbers to rise steadily in the coming days as preparations for the annual pilgrimage gather momentum.

## PM 'misleader', alleges Congress

In a post on X, Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said, "The prime minister is a so-called leader whose only distinguishing feature is his unmatched ability to be a misleader."

The bills that his government has circulated for the special session of the Parliament contradict all the so-called assurances that he has been giving, the Congress leader said.

The southern states will lose their strength in the Lok Sabha, and so will smaller states in northwest India and states in the east, he argued.

"What happened to the uniform proportionate increase of strength in the Lok Sabha for all states - that was promised by the PM and some of his colleagues? That has not happened," Ramesh said.

The PM's assurances cannot be trusted and he is unable to rise beyond his crude power-grabbing impulses and be a statesman, even on an issue as sensitive as delimitation, the Congress general secretary said.

"The bills were uploaded on Dr. Ambedkar's birth anniversary. The delimitation provisions are an insult to his legacy and a reflection of his warning - delivered in the Constituent Assembly on November 25, 1949 - about the dangers of a government that isn't guided by constitutional morality," Ramesh said.

Battle lines were drawn between the government and the opposition on Tuesday over the women's quota and delimitation bills to be taken up during the special Parliament sitting this week, with the Congress questioning the intent behind the move and the BJP accusing it of failing women in the past.

Two prominent non-BJP chief ministers from the south - DMK's M K Stalin (Tamil Nadu) and Congress' A Revanth Reddy (Telangana) - sharpened their attack on the Centre over the issue of delimitation, with the Tamil Nadu CM warning of "massive agitation" if the state was harmed and his Telangana counterpart flagging "injustice".

Reddy wrote an open letter to Modi, urging him to convene an all-party meeting to deliberate on the proposed delimitation, alleging that an increase in Lok Sabha seats based on pro rata, without considering economic contribution, would lead to a distortion in the country's federal balance.

The pro rata model will not be acceptable to people and governments of southern states, and any attempt to proceed without addressing their concerns will inevitably lead to widespread opposition and resistance, as it touches upon the fundamental principle of fair representation, Reddy said.

Therefore, a collective solution that is both just and sustainable must be found, he had said.

Reddy also wrote to his counterparts from Andhra Pradesh (Chandrababu Naidu), Karnataka (Siddaramaiah), Kerala (Pinarayi Vijayan), Puducherry (N Rangasamy) and Tamil Nadu, calling for collective engagement among southern states to ensure that their concerns are articulated effectively at the national level.

Lok Sabha seats will be increased to up to 850 from the current 543 to "operationalise" the women's reservation law before the 2029 parliamentary polls, following a delimitation exercise to be carried out based on the last published census.

According to the draft Constitution amendment bill, which will be introduced in Parliament, seats would also be increased in state and Union territory assemblies to accommodate 33 per cent reservation for women.

## Opening Hormuz 'permanent' for world, says Trump

him not to send weapons to Iran.

"I had heard that China's giving weapons to, I mean -- you're seeing it all over the place -- to Iran... And I wrote him a letter asking him not to do that, and he wrote me a letter saying that essentially he's not doing that," he said.

Trump also said that his country's war on Iran could end very soon.

"I think it's close to over, yeah. I mean, I view it as very close to over," he said.

"If I pulled up stakes right now, it would take them 20 years to rebuild that country. And we're not finished. We'll see what happens. I think they want to make a deal very badly," he added.

Meanwhile, Iran on Wednesday said it will likely receive a delegation from Pakistan as a "continuation" of the ceasefire discussions with the US in Islamabad earlier this week.

Iran also said that it has been engaging with the United States through Pakistan, even after discussions to end the West Asia conflict failed on Sunday, following which Washington announced a "naval blockade" of the Hormuz and Tehran warned of retaliatory attacks on ports in the Gulf.

"Since Sunday, when the Iranian delegation returned to Tehran, several messages have been exchanged through Pakistan," said foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei in a weekly press briefing.

"Today, we are very likely to receive a Pakistani delegation as a continuation of the discussions in Islamabad," he added.

Trump had on Tuesday said that a second round of talks with Iran could happen "over the next two days," telling the New York Post the negotiations could be held again in Islamabad as diplomats worked through back channels to arrange them.

Regional officials said on Wednesday that the United States and Iran gave an "in principle agreement" to extend the two-week ceasefire, which is due to expire on April 22, to allow for more diplomacy.

One of the officials, who is involved in the mediation efforts, said mediators were working on a compromise to the three main disputed points -- Iran's nuclear program, the Strait of Hormuz and compensation for damages caused by US-Israeli strikes on Iran.

The war has jolted markets and rattled the global economy as shipping has been cut off and airstrikes have torn through military and civilian infrastructure across the region.