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## Women's Quota Bill defeated; fails to get 2/3rd majority

information gaps have been addressed.

"For nearly four decades, this issue of women's reservation in legislative bodies has been inordinately delayed. Now is the time to ensure that half of the nation's population receives its rightful due in decision-making. Even after so many decades of independence, it is not right that women in India have such limited representation in this area," he said.

In a short while from now, voting will take place in the Lok Sabha and "I urge and appeal to all political parties to reflect carefully and take a sensitive decision by voting in favour of women's reservation", the prime minister said.

"On behalf of our nari shakti, I also request all members not to do anything that may hurt the sentiments of women across India," Modi said. He said if this amendment is passed unanimously, it will further empower women and strengthen the country's democracy.

"Let us come together today to create history. Let us ensure that the women of India, who are half of the nation's population, receive their rightful due," the PM said.

Participating in the debate on three Bills to advance the implementation of women's reservation in Lok Sabha and state assemblies to 2029, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had yesterday cautioned the Opposition that women were watching all members and would not forget "ill intentions" aimed at stalling women's quota.

He had urged the opposition not to give a political colour to the government's bills for implementation of the women's reservation law and cautioned that they should be mindful that those who had opposed this in the past had suffered badly in elections.

## Iran restores Strait of Hormuz access for commercial vessels

in Tehran. The two sides discussed the situation in the region and the prospects for peace and stability, Iranian official media reported.

Munir stressed that ongoing efforts to end the war should continue. Iranian media had reported that the purpose of the Pakistani delegation's visit was to deliver a US message to the Iranian leadership and to plan the next round of negotiations.

Meanwhile, Pakistan has started preparing to host the second round of highstakes talks between the US and Iran during the next week. The US and Iran held rare direct talks in Pakistan over the weekend aimed at ending their conflict, but the talks ended early Sunday without any agreement.

Official sources in Pakistan on Friday said a feverish diplomatic activity followed to bring the two sides back to the negotiating table. It was met with success as both continue to observe the temporary two-week ceasefire, allowing Pakistan to relaunch its mediatory push.

After working behind the scenes, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif embarked on a tri-nation tour on Wednesday, while Field Marshal Munir travelled to Tehran. Shehbaz, after discussion with the Saudi and Qatari leaders, on Thursday night reached Turkiye, where he met Senior Advisor to the US President for Arab and African Affairs Massad Boulos on Friday.

During the meeting in Antalya, PM Shehbaz and Boulos discussed "current regional developments, including Pakistan's peace efforts that led to the ceasefire as well as the historic Islamabad Talks," the prime minister's office said.

According to officials in Islamabad, preparations for the second round of talks have "started in Islamabad and neighbouring Rawalpindi as thousands of police and paramilitary personnel have started coming from other provinces."

During the first round of talks, more than 10,000 security personnel were deployed.

There are also reports that transport companies have been approached by the Islamabad and Rawalpindi districts officials to inform them that traffic coming from other cities or leaving the twin cities may face drastic restrictions.

According to a message shared on social media, such restrictions, once imposed, may continue until the end of next week. It urged citizens to avoid unnecessary travel during the next week or plan well in advance. The chances of a peace deal got further support when President Trump told reporters on Thursday that he may travel to Islamabad if a final agreement with Iran is signed there, while claiming that Tehran has accepted "almost everything" currently under negotiation.

"If a deal is signed in Islamabad, I may go...They want me," he told the reporters on the White House lawn before departing for Nevada and Arizona.

Trump expressed optimism about Pakistan-led diplomatic efforts to end hostilities and secure a settlement before the current ceasefire expires, indicating that he would extend it, although he suggested such a move might not be necessary if a deal is reached in time.

The conflict began after the US and Israel launched attacks on Iran on February 28, killing Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and several top commanders.

The ceasefire between the US and Iran would expire on April 21.

## MeT predicts rain, gusty winds till Apr 19

winds reaching speeds of 40-50 kmph and possible hailstorms at isolated locations were likely during this period.

"Weather is expected to improve from April 20 to 24, with generally dry conditions prevailing across the Union Territory. Similar conditions are forecast for April 25 & 26, though brief spells of light rain or thundershower with gusty winds may occur at isolated places towards the afternoon," the officials added.

Officials said strong winds last evening caused minor disruptions in power supply across several areas of the UT.

## 20 officers appointed as executive magistrates

The move is aimed at strengthening administrative and law-and-order mechanisms in Reasi district.

The officers are: Sachin Sharma, Shahid Iqbal, Ram Paul, Anmol, Ganaie-Nisaq-ul-Farooq, Aarti, Surinder-

jeet Kour, Lekha Bhasin, Mohammad Ajaz, Ujwal Sambyal, Mukesh Kumar, Bhawani Atri, Rajat Abrol, Vishal Angurana, Sanjay Bhatt, Anupam Kaul, Siddant Dubey, Anil Kumar Bhagat, Jayoti Saroop and Rajinder Singh Parihar.

## Admin bans inflammatory social media content

"In exercise of the powers conferred under Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 (BNSS), I hereby order that posting, uploading, sharing or forwarding any content - text, image, video, audio, meme, graphic or reel - that promotes enmity, hatred or ill-will between communities on grounds of religion, race, caste, community, language or region is strictly prohibited within the territorial jurisdiction of district Jammu," District Magistrate Rakesh Minhas said.

The BNSS empowers the district magistrate to pass orders to prevent obstruction, annoyance or injury to any person lawfully employed, or danger to human life, health or safety, or disturbance of public tranquillity, or a riot, or an affray.

The District Magistrate, in the order, stated that with immediate effect, certain acts are strictly prohibited within the territorial jurisdiction of Jammu district. "These measures have been put in place to maintain public order and prevent misuse of social media for activities that may disturb communal harmony," the order read.

For enforcement, the Senior Superintendent of Police, Jammu, has been directed to ensure immediate registration of FIRs against violators, while the Cyber Crime Unit will maintain round-the-clock monitoring of on-line platforms.

"Special monitoring cells will also be set up at the sub-divisional level." The administration said the restrictions come into force immediately and will remain in effect for 60 days unless modified or withdrawn earlier, adding that the order applies to all individuals and platforms whose content may impact public order within Jammu district.

## Harivanshre-elected RS deputy chairman

which was accepted without contest. Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated Harivansh on his re-election, acknowledging his experience and contribution to the functioning of the Upper House. Leader of the Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge also extended his congratulations.

The journalist-turned politician's re-election is notable as it marks the first time a nominated member has been chosen for the post of Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha.

## Gold falls Rs 1,600, silver Rs 5,700

action as markets stayed cautious ahead of key updates expected over the weekend on post-ceasefire developments," Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst - Commodity and Currency, LKP Securities, said.

He added that the lack of fresh triggers kept gold in a sideways consolidation phase, despite underlying uncertainty. Overall, gold is likely to remain rangebound with a volatile bias, reacting sharply to any weekend developments.

In the overseas markets, spot gold was trading marginally lower at USD 4,786.90 per ounce, while silver gained 1.12 per cent to USD 79.28 per ounce "Gold maintained a negative bias on Friday, remaining below the USD 4,800 mark as upside momentum weakened," Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst of Commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

He noted that despite some supportive developments, prices were unable to sustain higher levels, indicating a loss of bullish traction.

Additionally, gold faced pressure from a relatively firm US dollar and stable Treasury bond yields, as markets remained cautious amid ongoing uncertainty regarding the situation in the Strait of Hormuz, Gandhi said.

"While hopes for renewed negotiations provided some underlying support, the absence of clear progress left investors on the sidelines," he added.

## India, China resume SCO talks as ties cautiously improve

the SCO framework, including in the areas of security, trade, connectivity, and people-to-people ties," the statement added.

The MEA noted that India and China agreed to continue mutual consultations in the future, underlining the importance of sustained dialogue within the SCO platform.

The visit comes as part of ongoing diplomatic engagements between India and China within the SCO framework, aimed at strengthening cooperation and dialogue on regional and multilateral issues.

Comprising 10 member countries in addition to India, SCO includes Belarus, China, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. There are also several dialogue partners and observers.

India has been a member of the SCO since 2017, after having been an Observer since 2005.

During its membership period, India has held the chair of the SCO Council of Heads of Government in 2020 and of the SCO Council of Heads of State from 2022 to 2023.

India, as the chair of SCO, had articulated its priorities as moving towards a 'Secure' SCO - Security, Economic Development, Connectivity, Unity, Respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, and Environmental protection.

India had also directed the cooperation in SCO towards five new verticals like Startups and Innovation, Traditional Medicine, Science and Technology, Youth Empowerment and Shared Buddhist Heritage.

In the course of its presidency of SCO in 2022-2023, New Delhi worked on a diverse range of themes to give a new dynamism to the multifaceted cooperation and, in many areas, opened up new vistas of cooperation to meaningfully enrich SCO's agenda.

## At UN, India flags attacks on shipping

General Assembly debate at the UN General Assembly convened nine days after China & Russia vetoed a Bahrain-

led Security Council draft resolution on the Strait.

The draft resolution had called on Iran to immediately halt attacks on shipping and any attempts to impede transit through the waterway. It also sought coordinated defensive measures by states to ensure safe passage, which could include escorting merchant vessels.

"India has deplored the fact that commercial shipping was made a target of military attacks in this conflict," Parvathaneni said.

India reiterated that the targeting of commercial shipping and endangering innocent civilian crew members, or otherwise impeding the freedom of navigation and commerce in the Strait of Hormuz, are unacceptable.

Underscoring that international law in this regard must be fully respected, Parvathaneni said India strongly urges that safe and unimpeded freedom of navigation and global commerce through the Strait of Hormuz be restored at the earliest.

He also voiced concern over the loss of the precious lives of Indian seafarers aboard ships during the course of the conflict.

Parvathaneni was delivering remarks at the United Nations General Assembly debate under the Veto Initiative on "The Situation in the Middle East", a meeting that was held after Russia and China vetoed a Bahrain-led resolution in the UN Security Council earlier this month on reopening the Strait of Hormuz.

The veto by two permanent members of the 15-nation Security Council triggered the UNGA debate on the issue.

The Indian envoy said that since the outbreak of the conflict in Iran and the Gulf region on February 28 this year, India had expressed deep concern and urged all states to exercise restraint, avoid escalation and prioritise the safety of civilians.

"We have urged all states to promote dialogue and diplomacy and de-escalation of tensions, and to purposefully address underlying issues. We have also called for respect of sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states," he said.

Amid the West Asia conflict, the Ministry of External Affairs said last month that eight Indian nationals have lost their lives while one remained missing in "various incidents" in the region.

As the Strait of Hormuz, the crucial oil artery located between Oman and Iran connecting the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea, virtually closed due to the conflict, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres had said that when this crucial chokepoint is "strangled, the world's poorest and most vulnerable cannot breathe.

UN Trade & Development (UNCTAD) has warned that the Strait of Hormuz, a central artery for global energy trade, has seen activity fall to a near halt. Ship transits dropped from around 130 per day in February to just six in March - a collapse of about 95%.

"The disruption is hitting a large share of global oil and gas supplies, with immediate consequences for production, trade and consumption worldwide. It is also spilling over into transport systems, including maritime routes, air cargo and port logistics," UNCTAD has said.

The UN agency has warned that if the military escalation and disruptions persist, the suffering will extend far beyond the region, translating into widespread economic hardship.

The conflict began on February 28, when the United States and Israel carried out coordinated strikes on Iran. Tehran subsequently shut the Strait of Hormuz, a critical chokepoint through which roughly a fifth of global oil and gas supplies had moved, pushing up fuel prices worldwide.

## India reviewing Bangladesh's request to extradite Sheikh Hasina

Jaiswal added, highlighting the ongoing diplomatic engagement between the two nations.

Both nations have agreed to utilise formal channels to explore new proposals for cooperation in trade, energy, and regional security. "The two sides agreed to explore proposals for deepening the partnership through the relevant bilateral mechanisms," the spokesperson remarked, pointing toward a structured path forward.

Official meetings are being scheduled to align the two countries' perspectives on regional and global issues, ensuring that the partnership remains resilient despite the extradition impasse.

"Official meetings are expected to take place at an early date for both sides' views on regional and global issues of mutual interest," Jaiswal said, underscoring the importance of sustained dialogue in the current regional context.

The current diplomatic climate is shaped by the events of July 2024, when a student-led uprising ended the long-standing regime of the Awami League. While Dhaka's new leadership is under domestic pressure to bring Hasina back to face trial, New Delhi's priority remains the "best interests of the people of Bangladesh," prioritising stability and democracy in the neighbouring nation.

As judicial reviews continue, the MEA remains steadfast in its position: India will follow its legal "due process" while ensuring that its strategic bond with Bangladesh is not held hostage by the fate of a single individual.

## Inducements worth Rs 865 cr seized in WB, Tamil Nadu: ECI

surveillance teams, as district-level grievance committees have been set up to address complaints related to enforcement actions.

Citizens and political parties have been urged to report Model Code of Conduct violations through the C-Vigil mobile application, the ECI said, while reiterating that it is committed to conducting free, fair and inducement-free elections across all poll-bound states including West Bengal and Tamil Nadu.

The ECI will hold 2-phase voting in West Bengal on April 23 and 29 and single phase on April 23 in Tamil Nadu.

## Ukraine NSA meets EAM, Doval to discuss path to peace

media after meeting Umerov that they discussed "bilateral cooperation and exchanged views on the Ukraine conflict".

Doval and Umerov reviewed bilateral relations and discussed the Russia-Ukraine conflict, external affairs ministry spokesperson said on social media. Doval "reiterated India's principled position and focus on peaceful resolution through dialogue and diplomacy", he said.

Umerov said he and Doval discussed the development of

bilateral ties and assessed the security situation. "The Indian side reaffirmed its consistent position on the need for a peaceful settlement based on dialogue and diplomacy," he said in a social media post.

"I am grateful for the shared understanding of the need to find solutions that will ensure a lasting peace," Umerov added.

Umerov said in a separate social media post that he and Jaishankar discussed the "current situation on the front line, the progress of negotiations, and the prospects for achieving a just, lasting, and sustainable peace for Ukraine".

The two sides also focused on the development of bilateral cooperation and the implementation of agreements outlined in the joint statement issued by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and Prime Minister Narendra Modi following his visit to Kyiv in August 2024.

"I am grateful for the open and substantive dialogue. We look forward to further strengthening bilateral cooperation," Umerov said.

The Ukrainian side has pushed for Zelenskyy's visit to India, especially after Russian President Vladimir Putin's trip to New Delhi last year for an annual summit.

India has not publicly censured Russia for the invasion of Ukraine, while pushing for a peaceful resolution of the conflict. During meetings with Putin and Zelenskyy, Modi has said that solutions cannot be found on the battlefield and talks cannot succeed under the shadow of the gun.

## Omar meets delegations, assures time-bound redressal of public issues

teaching fraternity.

Moreover, several individuals met the chief minister to seek resolution of their grievances.

Abdullah gave a patient hearing to all the delegations and individuals, assuring that all their genuine issues would be addressed on priority.

## LG flags off 'Shobha Yatra'; prays for peace, prosperity

Ved Prakash Sharma, president of Dogra Brahman Pratinidhi Sabha, and members of organising committee, heads of various religious organisations, prominent citizens and people from different walks of life attended the flag off ceremony.

Senior officials and prominent citizens were also present on the occasion.

The Parade area and city markets had been tastefully decorated to mark the day.

## PM's 'nefarious attempt' defeated: Cong

general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh alleged that the Prime Minister and Home Minister had made a mischievous attempt to tie delimitation proposals to women's reservation, an issue he said had already been settled, and asserted that the move had now been rejected in the Lower House.

"This is a win for our democracy, our federalism, and the Constitution. This also calls into question the legitimacy of the non-biological, non-grihasthi PM," Ramesh said.

"The next steps for the Modi government are clear -- they should implement 33 per cent reservation for women in the existing set up of the Lok Sabha for the 2029 elections," he said.

"This has been the consistent demand of the entire Opposition ever since September 2023 when the Parliament unanimously passed the Nari Shakti Vandan Act 2023 - which finally got notified only late last night," Ramesh said.

His remarks came on Friday, minutes after the Constitution amendment bill to implement reservation for women in legislatures in 2029 and increase the number of seats of the Lok Sabha was defeated in the Lower House.

While 298 members voted in support of the Bill, 230 MPs voted against it. Out of 528 members who voted, the bill required 352 votes for a two-thirds majority.

## JKIMPARD gets special Award for Excellence

ening its administrative capacity.

According to the official data, 2,01,962 officials from the UT have been onboarded on the platform, collectively achieving 4,13,722 course completions. Of these, 2,74,511 completions were in AI-focused courses. Further, 54,003 employees have completed more than one hour of learning while 37,309 officials have surpassed four hours, indicating deep engagement with the initiative.

The award was presented during the S'DHANA Saptah Facilitation Ceremony held at Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi.

Union Minister Jitendra Singh presided over the function and felicitated the top-performing States, Union Territories and institutions. Commissioner/Secretary, General Administration Department, M Raju, received the award on behalf of the government of Jammu & Kashmir.

In a notable achievement, the Jammu and Kashmir Institute of Management, Public Administration and Rural Development (JKIMPARD) was conferred a Special Award for becoming the first institution in the country to successfully complete the Capacity Building Plans (CBPs) across all the departments. This sets a national benchmark in operationalizing Mission Karmayogi objectives at the State/UT level.

During S'DHANA Saptah, the UT administration ensured active participation through a structured and closely monitored approach. The nodal officers were designated to oversee the engagement and ensure completion of the prescribed learning hours on the iGOT platform, strictly in line with the NPCSCB guidelines. The J&K Chief Secretary efficiently monitored the progress through regular reviews to ensure effective implementation of the ambitious programme.

Dr Singh has consistently emphasised the strengthening capacity building and promoting good governance practices. This commitment was reinforced at the recent Regional Conference in Jammu on Holistic Development of Districts, which focused on integrated planning, enhanced capacity and improved governance outcomes at the grassroots level.

The recognition underscores the government's commitment towards building a competent, accountable and citizen-centric civil service, aligned with the vision of Mission Karmayogi Bharat. The Jammu & Kashmir government has reiterated its resolve to further strengthen the capacity-building mechanisms and sustain reform momentum for improved public service delivery.