

Women's public role shrink in China as official rhetoric shift towards family, children: Study

BEIJING, AUG 9: The Chinese Communist Party (CPC) has long portrayed the protection of women's rights as one of its achievements but studies have found that their role in public life has diminished in recent years, particularly at the highest levels of political and policy leadership.

For decades, the Party promoted Mao Zedong's famous slogan that "women hold up half the sky" as a guiding principle for gender equality. But the narrative in China's official media has shifted in recent years, increasingly emphasising women's domestic and familial roles, according to a recent study that analysed articles in the People's Daily, the CPC's official mouthpiece.

The ruling CPC, which exercises tight political control over the country, has for decades claimed that women have played an active role in "socialist modernisation and reform and opening up".

However, a widening gap in the portrayal of women began to emerge in the late 1990s, according to the study by two Hong Kong-based researchers.

Published in the journal *Frontiers in Sociology* in May, the study found that the People's Daily had increasingly associated women with domestic and family roles while giving less prominence to their roles in the public sphere.

The researchers, Jia Wang of Hong Kong Polytechnic University and Ruiyu Zhang of the University of Hong Kong, analysed more than 125,000 articles published in the People's Daily between 1990 and 2023.

They identified vocabulary associated with the public sphere, including terms such as "leading woman", "fighter", "career" and "entrepreneurship", and words



associated with the private sphere, such as "family", "childbearing", "housework" and "loving mother".

The researchers then examined how frequently neutral terms such as "female" and "woman" appeared near words from the two groups over the years.

The study found that the association between women and the private sphere remained strong throughout the period analysed, according to the Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post, which published an article covering parts of the study on Sunday.

In the early 1990s, references linking women to public roles were also relatively strong, nearly matching those associated with the private sphere.

One example was a 1992 People's Daily article titled "In the past, women were said to be inferior to men; today, they hold up half the sky", which described a labour competition and said women played an active role in "socialist modernisation and reform and opening up".

From the late 1990s onwards, however, the gap widened, with references linking women to public roles declining sharply, the study found.

For instance, in 2017, People's Daily ran an article titled "Giving birth is easy, raising children is difficult",

in which the paper quoted a woman who had left work and stayed at home when her child entered primary school.

The gap reached its widest point in 2018, which the researchers said pointed to a "decisive rhetorical shift", with women increasingly associated with domestic and familial roles rather than the public sphere.

From 2020 onwards, however, a modest rebound in references linking women to public roles was observed. The authors suggested this could reflect demographic pressures, labour market needs and international attention to gender equality, the Post reported.

The researchers said the changing rhetoric in state media was closely intertwined with "broader institutional and ideological shifts".

The decline in women's representation has also been evident at the highest levels of China's political hierarchy. There have been no women among the 24 members of the Politburo since 2022.

No woman has ever served on the powerful seven-member Politburo Standing Committee, China's highest-ranking decision-making body.

Out of the 31 provincial party heads, only one woman figured. Newspaper Subscriptions

Even in the party member-

ship, about 30 per cent were women among its 101 million members.

Other studies reported that women cadres are disproportionately assigned to education, health, culture, sports, civil affairs, which are seen as "suitable" but not paths to higher positions in the party hierarchy.

The fast-track to the Politburo runs through economic management, finance, industry, provincial governorships, and central ministries-areas where women are rarely placed.

The findings come against the backdrop of China's efforts to address its demographic challenges.

China ended its decades-old one-child policy in 2016, allowing all couples to have two children.

In 2021, it introduced a three-child policy as the country faced declining birth rates and an ageing population.

There are also studies that have examined the implications of these policy changes for women's employment and gender equality.

An analysis by the Organisation for Research on China and Asia has argued that while projecting a global image of gender equality, China continues to instrumentalise women's reproductive capacities to meet population goals, constraining women's reproductive autonomy to fulfil its population objectives.

An article in *Sichuan University Journal* earlier this year said the policy to have more children produces a "motherhood penalty". As a result, women's labour force participation falls, wages drop, and promotion is blocked. There is no comparable penalty for men, it said. (PTI)

Youth India's biggest strength, its potential unmatched: Rahul Gandhi in Prayagraj

PRAYAGRAJ (UP), AUG 8: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi today said India's youths are the country's greatest strength, and their potential is unparalleled in the world..

Addressing the 'Chhatron Ki Goonj' programme at KP Ground here, Gandhi said, "You are the power and pride of India. When I say this, I am talking about every Indian citizen."

He added, "This evening I want to speak to you about dard (pain), data, and daulat (wealth)."

The Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha said India's 40 crore youths constitute its "greatest strength."

He said that while there is much talk about America, China and Russia, "India's youths are unparalleled."

Gandhi also raised his concerns about the debasement of educational credentials in the country.

Today, education certificates have no meaning in India because they cannot give you a job," he said.

Gandhi said all doors of employment are "closed" in



the country. He said that a decline in manufacturing, difficulties in securing loans, exam paper leaks and artificial intelligence replacing jobs were hurting the youths' prospects.

On the recent student protests all over the country, Gandhi said the youth "lit a light in the darkness" by confronting their fears and, in doing so, helped change the country. Hinduism

"We will never resort to hatred or violence. We will change the system with love and affection," Gandhi said, and urged the youth to follow suit.

Gandhi spoke before a large gathering of students and competitive exam aspirants, who turned up despite waterlogging and muddy patches at the venue.

Dance performances by rappers from Mumbai were

staged ahead of Gandhi's arrival.

In the run-up to the much-publicised event, the Congress on Friday took out a motorcycle rally in the city, led by the party's Uttar Pradesh president Ajay Rai.

Students at the event complained of problems in hostels and concerns with competitive exams, which they said they hope to raise before Gandhi. (PTI)

Mayawati Opposes 'Creamy Layer' For SCs, STs In Reservation, Hits Out At RSS

LUCKNOW, AUG 9: BSP supremo Mayawati on Sunday opposed the 'creamy layer' concept in reservations for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, arguing that affirmative action was linked to their social transformation, economic emancipation and self-respect and criticised the RSS for allegedly politicising the issue.

In a post on X, Mayawati said reservation was an "extremely important and sensitive" issue for SC, ST and OBC communities, particularly for SCs and STs who have faced discrimination, exploitation and deprivation for centuries.

She said discussing a 'creamy layer' for these communities was not only inappropriate but also contrary to the "humanitarian objectives" of the Constitu-

tion drafted under the leadership of Dr BR Ambedkar.

"Reservation is essentially about giving millions of people who have been victims of the caste system for centuries, and who have been exploited, oppressed, neglected and ostracised, their constitutional and legal right to equality on humanitarian grounds," she said.

Mayawati also criticised RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat's recent remarks that reservation had been deliberately politicised, creating bitterness in society, and that beneficiaries should voluntarily give up their benefits.

She described the RSS position as reflecting a "casteist mindset" and said it might serve narrow political interests but would undermine constitutional ob-

jectives.

Caste discrimination cannot be measured merely through economic progress. Its impact continues to affect every aspect of the lives of those who have suffered from it," she said. Mayawati said successive governments at the Centre were aware of the "ground reality" and urged the present government to effectively argue its case before the courts if it wanted SCs and STs to be kept outside the scope of the creamy layer.

"If the government, based on valid arguments, effectively presents its case and persuades the court to keep the SC and ST communities outside the creamy layer, it would be entirely appropriate and constitutional," she said.

Myanmar junta rebuffs ASEAN call to free Aung San Suu Kyi, questions need for envoy

BANGKOK, AUG 9: Myanmar's military-backed government has rejected the Association of Southeast Asian Nations' renewed call for the unconditional release of detained former leader Aung San Suu Kyi and dismissed the need for the organization's special envoy on Myanmar, according to the foreign affairs ministry.

President Min Aung Hlaing, the former army chief who had originally seized power in 2021 from Suu Kyi's civilian government, has been trying to win political legitimacy since the takeover and resume relations with ASEAN.

ASEAN came up with a peace plan for the Southeast Asian country in April 2021 to end hostilities and initiate dialogue among contending parties, to be facilitated by the special envoy. Min Aung Hlaing has since been barred from attending top-level meetings for failing to comply with the plan.

In an apparent effort to placate critics, the govern-



ment allowed a representative of the International Committee of the Red Cross to visit 81-year-old Suu Kyi last week, the first known contact with an outside international independent humanitarian organization since her detention five years ago. South Asians & Diaspora

Suu Kyi is serving her sentence under house arrest at an undisclosed location in the capital Naypyitaw, on charges that her supporters and rights groups have said are politically motivated.

The current ASEAN chair,

the Philippines, welcomed the meeting as a step toward dialogue and reconciliation on Friday, while urging greater access to political detainees and reiterating its call for Suu Kyi's "complete and unconditional release."

Myanmar's foreign ministry's statement late Saturday criticized the call.

"Although the government has commuted her sentences based on humanitarian considerations, the matter of a full and unconditional release shall only be carried out in accordance with the law," it

said. The statement also said the government will continue working with ASEAN's current special envoy, Philippine Foreign Minister Maria Theresa Lazaro, but doesn't see the need to continue down that path when Singapore takes over on Jan. 1, 2027.

"At present, the government, which emerged from the multiparty democratic elections reflecting the genuine will of the people, has assumed state responsibility," the statement said.

In a speech more than three months after being sworn in as president following the elections, Min Aung Hlaing dismissed ASEAN's peace plan, saying some member states have discriminated against Myanmar and it would respond on a case-by-case basis.

Critics dismissed the elections, which were held in December and January, as a sham designed to consolidate the military's grip on power while ostensibly restoring civilian rule. (AP)

TOKYO, AUG 9: Nagasaki marked on Sunday the 81st anniversary of the US atomic bombing of the southwestern city, as the mayor called nuclear weapons "absolute evil," denounced growing support for nuclear deterrence and called on the Japanese government to adhere to its three postwar non-nuclear principles.

The anniversary coincided with Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's government revising the country's defense policy to further bolster the military's offensive capability. Speculation has risen about whether Takaichi, who supports nuclear dissuasion, may allow nuclear weapons to be brought into the country, going against the third non-nuclear principle.

Mayor Shiro Suzuki said that while some countries argue the possession of nuclear weapons helps deter potential attackers, the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki had demonstrated that humans can cross the



line.

"The theory of nuclear deterrence is extremely dangerous and fragile. Nuclear weapons are not a necessary evil but an absolute evil," and can never coexist with humanity," Suzuki said. "To all leaders of the nuclear states and nations relying on nuclear deterrence, you must face the reality that the more you rely on nuclear deterrence, the more you increase the risk of a nuclear war."

The United States launched the Nagasaki attack on Aug. 9, 1945, killing 70,000 by the end of that year, three days after the bombing of Hiroshima that killed 140,000. Japan sur-

rendered on Aug. 15, 1945, ending World War II and the nearly half-century of aggression across Asia.

Representatives from more than 90 countries attended the ceremony at the Peace Park on Sunday and observed a moment of silence at 11:02 a.m. when a B-29 dropped a plutonium bomb, known as "Fat Man."

Suzuki singled out the Japanese government, demanding it uphold Japan's war-renouncing Constitution, attend the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons review conference

later this year and stick to the three non-nuclear principles. Takaichi supports the first

two principles of not possessing and developing nuclear weapons.

The prime minister, who attended Sunday's ceremony, reiterated her policy of taking "a realistic and pragmatic approach" toward achieving a world without nuclear weapons. As she did in Hiroshima, Takaichi remained ambiguous about the three non-nuclear principles and only reiterated that Japan currently maintains the policy.

Takaichi, in her speech at the ceremony, did not mention the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which Tokyo has refused to sign because Japan is under the protection of the US nuclear umbrella.

She later told reporters that Japan's policy is to work within the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty, and that her government will decide what to do with the treaty based on what's most effective to ensure the country's national security and push forward nuclear disarmament.

Iran sets demands for reopening Strait of Hormuz as talks with Oman continue

TEHRAN, AUG 9: Iran has laid out a series of demands for the United States to meet before Tehran will agree to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, raising the stakes in negotiations over the vital waterway and underscoring the deep mistrust between the two countries.

Mohammad Bagher Zolghadr, secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, said the United States would have to change what Tehran described as its hostile conduct before the strait could reopen.

"Until America corrects its behavior, the Strait of Hormuz will not be reopened," Zolghadr said in a statement carried by Iranian state media on Sat-

urday.

Among the demands are an end to the US naval blockade, the withdrawal of American military forces, an end to military operations against Iran and its allies, and the lifting of sanctions. Iran is also seeking compensation for damage caused by the conflict and the unconditional release of Iranian assets frozen abroad.

Zolghadr said Washington must also stop threatening Iran and what he described as insults to the country's religious sanctities. He said the demands reflected the position of the Iranian people after months of war.

"These are the demands of the Iran-



ian people, which they have loudly proclaimed during 160 days of steadfast presence in the field and in the streets," he said.

The statement came as Iranian and

Omani officials continued talks aimed at finding a way to manage the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz, one of the world's most important energy corridors. South Asians & Diaspora

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said Saturday that Tehran was "very close" to reaching an agreement with Oman over arrangements for the waterway. But he cautioned that reopening the strait would depend on additional conditions, including what Iran said was the need for Washington to make amends for violating a memorandum of understanding reached in June.

Oman's Foreign Ministry described the negotiations as "positive and constructive." The negotiations have taken place against a backdrop of conflicting signals from Washington and Tehran. US Vice President JD Vance said Saturday that Iranian officials had told the

United States they had no plans to close the waterway. Iran's state broadcaster, IRIB, reported on Friday that lawmakers had largely agreed on a proposed framework with Oman but were awaiting final approval.

The Strait of Hormuz, through which a substantial share of the world's oil supplies passes, has become a central point of leverage in the confrontation. Any prolonged disruption to the waterway could have consequences far beyond the region, particularly for global energy markets. Zolghadr said Iran's Supreme National Security Council would maintain its position in both military and diplomatic negotiations. (UNI)