

"Whenever you see a successful woman, look out for three men who are going out of their way to try to block her."

—Yulia Tymoshenko

Making the Truth

Govt assures fair delimitation, says South to gain seats; Opposition questions move

3 Bills on Women's Quota, delimitation panel introduced in LS

NEW DELHI: Strongly backing the implementation of women's reservation in legislatures in 2029, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday made it clear that no state will be discriminated against in the delimitation of constituencies, even as the opposition claimed democracy will be finished in India if the Constitution amendment bill is passed.

Intervening in the debate in Lok Sabha on the three bills introduced for amendment of the women's quota law and to set up a delimitation commission, Modi also said if any political party opposes the women's quota law, it is quite natural that he (Modi) would be politically benefited.

"Those who oppose women quota bill will pay a price for a long time," he said.



"Here, some people think that there is political self-interest of Modi in this move. If you oppose it, natural I will gain political benefit, but if you walk along, no one will gain any political advantage.

We don't want credit," he added.

Allaying fears of some states over the delimitation exercise, particularly those from the southern and eastern regions, the prime minister said no state will be discriminated against under the move.

"I want to say from this House today with a great sense of responsibility that whether it is the south, the

north, the east, the west, small states or big states, this decision making process will not discriminate against any state or do injustice to anyone," he said.

Modi also made it clear that the proportion of Lok Sabha seats in any state will not come down as a result of the delimitation exercise.

"There will be no change in that proportion (of Lok Sabha seats) either, and the increase will also be in the same proportion," he said.

In his short response to the debate during the day, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said the Lok Sabha seats in five southern states will go up to 195 from the present 129, an increase of 50 per cent, when the total seats in the Lower House will be enhanced to 816. ▶ P11

No rest till J&K gets rid of drug menace: Sinha

'Drug-Free J&K' drive to begin in Valley on May 3

■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

SRINAGAR: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Thursday said he will not rest till he rids Jammu and Kashmir of the drug menace.

All the departments, be it the social welfare department or the health department, are working towards the drug-free goal, he said, addressing a women farmers' conference here.

"I have launched the 'Nasha Mukh' campaign on April 11 in Jammu, and we have decided that we will not rest till we eradicate the drug abuse problem," Sinha said.

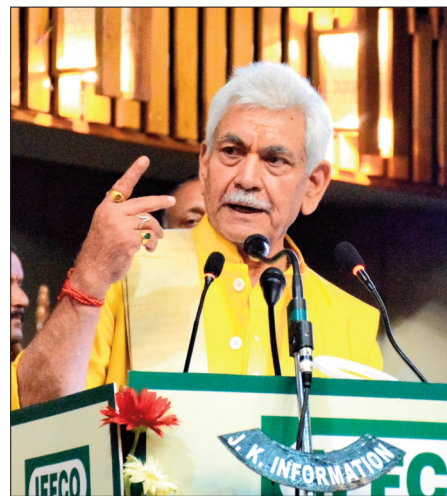
"When Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the 'Nasha Mukh Bharat Abhiyan' in 2020, a lot of efforts were made in Jammu and Kashmir as well. Police are taking action on their part, more drugs are being seized, there are more arrests than earlier, and more cases are being registered," he added.

Sinha said the anti-drug abuse campaign will also be launched in Kashmir in the first week of May.

"We will be launching the Kashmir chapter of the campaign on May 3. I request you sisters to come forward and contribute towards a drug-free Jammu and Kashmir," he said.

The L-G said the government alone cannot overcome this problem.

"We have seen women who have lost a child or their daughter has fallen victim to drug



abuse. We can get rid of this menace when the power of government is supported by the efforts of the people," he added.

The L-G highlighted the contributions of women farmers in agriculture and allied sectors and agri-entrepreneurship.

Sinha said, "Without women farmers, every plate would be empty, leaving humanity starved."

"They sustain the world, work harder than their male counterparts and their ▶ P11

1 killed, four hurt as winds hit structure

SRINAGAR: A 40-year-old labourer died and four others injured after strong winds blew away the roof of a cold storage facility in Pulwama district, officials said on Thursday.

The incident occurred at the Lassipora industrial estate, where the structure suffered damage due to gusty winds, they said.

Five persons were trapped under the debris and were later evacuated and rushed to the hospital, where one of them, Sajad Ahmad Mir, 40, was declared dead on arrival, officials ▶ P11

Military conflicts won't resolve issues amid 'very tense' global situation: PM Modi, Macron discuss West Asia crisis

NEW DELHI: The world is going through a "very tense" situation impacting all nations, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Thursday, pitching for bringing lasting peace to Ukraine and West Asia as military conflict cannot solve any problem.

Modi made the remarks after holding wide-ranging talks with Austria's Federal Chancellor Christian Stocker that focused on significantly ramping up bilateral ties in areas of trade, defence and infrastructure.

Following the talks, India and Austria signed six agreements including one on counter-terror cooperation and another on setting up a fast track mechanism to help Indian and Austrian companies



wanting to invest in each other's economies. A separate pact was signed for cooperation on military matters.

In their talks, Modi and Stocker extensively deliberated on the consequences of the conflicts in West Asia and ▶ P11

Bhaderwah to host two-day Lavender Fest from May 31

■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU: Jammu and Kashmir's Bhaderwah, popularly known as 'Chota Kashmir' and the 'land of purple revolution', will host the two-day Lavender Festival 2026 from May 31 at an unprecedented scale, with leading figures from the national aroma industry expected to participate, officials said on Thursday.

Lavender cultivation has given the small town in Doda district a distinct national identity and a role in India's growth story, officials said.

"The Lavender Festival 2026 will be held on May 31 and June 1 at an unprecedented scale, with national aroma industry leaders expected to be present in Bhaderwah," Director of CSIR-Indian Institute of Integrative Medicine (IIIM), Jammu, Dr Zabeer Ahmed, told reporters here.

Tracing the journey of the Aroma Mission, he said it began as a small

project in 2014 under the guidance of Union Minister and CSIR Vice President Dr Jitendra Singh. "From one farm, lavender cultivation has now expanded across this region and to states like Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh and the northeastern region," he said.

Describing the festival as CSIR-IIIM's annual flagship event in the region, Ahmed said it aims to promote aromatic crops and strengthen farmers' enterprises.

He also announced that under Phase IV of the Aroma Mission, a Centre of Excellence is being planned at Bhaderwah in Doda district to provide assured markets, value addition facilities and training for local youth. "We will press for this centre to be established this season itself," he said.

Officials said that the CSIR-Aroma Mission has played a key role in promoting lavender cultivation in the temperate regions of Jammu and Kashmir, with the objective of ▶ P11

3 held for spreading misleading SM content

SRINAGAR: Three persons were arrested in Baramulla district for allegedly spreading rumours through various social media with the intent of disturbing peace, police said on Thursday.

Police in Sopore area of the north Kashmir district arrested three persons for spreading misinformation and sharing old videos by portraying them as recent incidents, with the intent to disturb public peace and order, a police spokesman said.

He said a case was registered at Sopore police station against ▶ P11

SIA chargesheets 10 in 'white-collar' terror case

■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

SRINAGAR: The Kashmir State Investigation Agency (SIA) on Thursday filed a chargesheet against 10 accused persons in the 'white collar' terror module case involving several doctors from Jammu and Kashmir.

"The SIA Kashmir filed the chargesheet in a significant terrorist conspiracy case involving a covert module commonly referred to as the 'Doctors Terror Module'," an agency spokesperson said.

Dr Umar Un Nabi, one of the ten accused, was killed in

the Red Fort blast last November. The other nine are Arif Nisar Dar alias Sahil, Yasir Ul Ashraf Bhat, Maqsood Ahmad Dar alias Shahid, Irfan Ahmad Wagay alias Owais, Zameer Ahmad Ahanger alias Mutlashi, Dr Muzamil Shakeel Ganaie alias Musaab, Dr Adeel Ahmad Rather alias Javaid, Dr Shaheen Saeed, and Tufail Ahmad Bhat.

All 10 accused were booked at Srinagar's Nowgam Police Station.

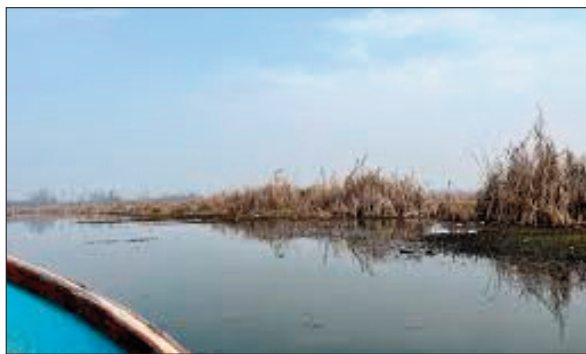
The present case originates from an incident in October last year when provocative and threatening posters were pasted in the ▶ P11

Hokersar lake under threat; CAG warns of decline, encroachment

■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

JAMMU: The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) has expressed serious concerns about the large-scale encroachment of over 2,500 kanals and ecological degradation of Hokersar Lake, warning that the wetland is facing rapid deterioration, and its "pristine glory" is at risk of extinction.

The CAG pulled up authorities for the failure of conservation and management of Hokersar lake, warning that the ecologically significant wetland is facing degradation due to pollution, encroachment and lack of scientific planning.



The CAG report on conservation of lakes in the Union territory for the year 2023-24, said the lack of proper survey and demarcation has led to the encroachment. "Around 2,528.10

kanals of lake area has been encroached upon for construction, plantations and agricultural activities. Despite issuance of notices, authorities were unable to ensure eviction of ▶ P11

Justice Hali gets extension as fee panel chief

JAMMU: The Jammu and Kashmir Government has extended the tenure of retired Justice Sunil Hali as Chairperson of the Committee for Fixation, Determination and Regulation of Fee of Private Schools for a further period of one month.

According to an official notification issued by the School Education Department from the Civil Secretariat, Jammu, the extension has been granted under S.O. 112 in exercise of powers conferred under Rule 4(3) of the ▶ P11

Quota on basis of religion unconstitutional: HM Shah

NEW DELHI: Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on Thursday that Muslims will not be given reservation on the basis of religion as such a quota would be unconstitutional.

During a fiery 40-minute debate, following which three bills were introduced in the Lok Sabha for amendment of the women's quota law and to set up a delimitation commission, Shah said a caste census will be carried out along with population enumeration during the ongoing census exercise.

"The question of providing reservation to Muslim women on the basis of religion does not even arise.

Our Constitution does not allow at all to give reservation on the basis of religion. I want to make it clear our government's resolve that Muslims will not be given reservation on the basis of religion. Such reservation is unconstitutional," a combative Shah said after the Samajwadi Party's Akhilesh Yadav and Dharmendra Yadav spoke in favour of giving a quota to Muslims.

The home minister said the Samajwadi Party members were saying that they would place the demand for a caste census but he would like to inform them that the government had already taken a decision to carry out the caste census ▶ P11

Sinha attends IFFCO's Women Farmers Conference

■ EARTH NEWS SERVICE

SRINAGAR: Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha on Thursday underscored the pivotal role of women farmers in sustaining the global food system, stating that without their contribution "every plate would be empty," while calling for greater recognition, resources and policy focus on women-led development during IFFCO's Women Farmers Conference in Srinagar.

Lieutenant Governor said, "Without women farmers,



every plate would be empty, leaving humanity starved. They sustain the world, work

harder than their male counterparts and their strength anchors food security, planting

seeds of prosperity for families and society in every field. Under Prime Minister ▶ P11

Lahore: LeT's co-founder hurt in attack

LAHORE: Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba terror group's co-founder Amir Hamza suffered bullet injuries in an attack by motorcycle-borne unidentified gunmen in Lahore on Thursday, police said.

Hamza is regarded as LeT's second most important leader after its chief Hafiz Saeed, who has been in Lahore's Kot Lakhpat Jail since 2019 after getting convicted for several years in terror financing cases.

According to police, unidentified gunmen opened fire on the vehicle of the private TV channel 24NewsHD TV, owned by Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi. The channel's religious programme host Justice (retd.) Nazir Ahmed Ghazi and Hamza were in the vehicle.

"Two unidentified armed men riding a motorcycle opened fire on the ▶ P11

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