

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi addresses the Mahila Sashaktikaran Mahasammelan on the occasion of 300th birth anniversary of Lokmata Devi Ahilya Bai Holkar in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh

PM inaugurates, lays foundation stone of multiple development projects in Bhopal

The name of Lokmata Devi Ahilyabai Holkar fills us with reverence, Words fall short to speak about her great personality: PM

Devi Ahilyabai was a great guardian of India's heritage: PM

Mata Ahilyabai is a symbol of invaluable contribution of our women power in nation building: PM

Our government is making the vision of women-led development the axis of development: PM

The Namu Drone Didi campaign is encouraging the rural women, increasing their income: PM

Today, a large number of women scientists are

# working in all our major space missions: PM

## Operation Sindoor has also become a symbol of the strength of our women power: PM

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On the occasion of the 300th birth anniversary of Lokmata Devi Ahilya Bai Holkar, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi addressed the Lokmata Devi Ahilyabai Mahila Sashaktikaran Mahasammelan in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh today. He also inaugurated and laid the foundation stone of multiple development projects in Bhopal. Speaking at the event, he began by paying tribute to ‘Maa Bharati’ and acknowledging the strength of India’s women. He expressed gratitude for the large gathering of sisters and daughters who had come to bless the event, stating that he felt honored by their presence. The Prime Minister highlighted that today marks the 300th birth anniversary of Lokmata Devi Ahilyabai Holkar, an occasion of inspiration for 140 crore Indians and a moment to contribute to the monumental efforts of nation-building. Quoting Devi Ahilyabai, he reiterated that true governance means serving the people and improving their lives. He remarked that today’s program embodies her vision and carries forward her ideals. The Prime Minister noted the launch of the Indore Metro, along with the addition of air connectivity for Datia and Satna. He emphasized that these projects will enhance infrastructure in Madhya Pradesh, accelerate development, and create new employment opportunities. He extended his congratulations to all present.

Expressing deep reverence upon hearing the name of Lokmata Devi Ahilyabai Holkar, Shri Modi stated that words fall short in describing her remarkable personality. He underscored that Devi Ahilyabai symbolizes the power of strong will and determination, demonstrating that no matter how adverse the circumstances, transformative outcomes can be achieved. Reflecting on history, Shri Modi highlighted that two-and-a-half to three centuries ago, when the nation was shackled by oppression, accomplishing such extraordinary feats—so profound that generations continue to discuss them—was no easy task.

Highlighting that Lokmata Ahilyabai Holkar never distinguished between service to the divine and service to the people, the Prime Minister noted that she was known to always carry a Shiva Lingam with her, signifying her deep devotion. Reflecting on the challenges of her time, he emphasized that leading a state during such an era was akin to wearing a crown of thorns. Yet, Lokmata Ahilyabai provided a new direction for her state's prosperity, dedicating herself to empowering even the poorest. “Lokmata Ahilyabai was a great guardian of India's heritage”, said Shri Modi, mentioning that at a time when the country's culture, temples, and pilgrimage sites were under attack, she took on the responsibility of preserving them. He remarked on her contribution to the restoration of numerous temples across the country, including Kashi Vishwanath. He expressed his privilege in being granted the opportunity to serve in the very city, Varanasi, where Lokmata Ahilyabai had undertaken extensive development work.

“Mata Ahilyabai implemented an exemplary governance model that prioritized the welfare of the poor and marginalized”, underlined Shri Modi, noting that she launched numerous initiatives to boost employment and entrepreneurship. She actively promoted agriculture, cottage industries based on forest produce, and handicrafts. To enhance agricultural productivity, she developed small canals and undertook extensive water conservation efforts, constructing numerous ponds around 250-300 years ago. She encouraged cotton and spice farming to increase farmers' income and promote crop diversity. Shri Modi emphasized her vision for tribal communities and nomadic groups, facilitating agricultural plans on unused land to support their livelihoods. Shri Modi said that it was his privilege to work under the direction of a tribal woman who is the President of India, Smt. Draupadi Murmu. He acknowledged Devi Ahilyabai’s contribution to the textile sector, establishing new industries for the world-renowned Maheshwari sarees, significantly benefiting the country’s weavers. He narrated that Devi Ahilyabai had invited a few saree weaving families from Junagarh,

Gujarat to start the same around 250-300 years ago.

“Devi Ahilyabai Holkar will always be remembered for her significant social reforms including advocacy for raising the minimum age for girls’ marriage, securing women’s right to property, and supporting widows’ remarriage—issues that were difficult to even discuss in her time”, said Shri Modi. He emphasized that despite societal challenges, Devi Ahilyabai strongly backed these progressive reforms. She also formed a special women’s unit in the Malwa army and established women’s safety groups in villages, ensuring protection and empowerment. “Mata Ahilyabai stands as a symbol of the invaluable contribution of women in nation-building”, remarked Shri Modi, paying respects to her, offering his prayers for her continued blessings upon all.

Recalling an inspiring statement by Devi Ahilyabai Holkar, emphasizing that everything received is a debt owed to the people, which must be repaid, the Prime Minister highlighted that their government is working in alignment with her values, upholding the principle of ‘Nagarik Devo Bhava’ as the mantra of governance. He underscored that the vision of women-led development is being placed at the core of the nation’s progress. He stressed that every major government initiative is centered around empowering mothers, sisters, and daughters. The Prime Minister noted that four crore homes have been built for the underprivileged, with a majority registered in the names of women. He pointed out that for many of these women, it is the first time their names have been associated with property ownership, marking a historic shift where crores of women across the country have become homeowners for the first time.

Emphasizing that the government is ensuring water supply through tap connections to every household, alleviating difficulties faced by women, Shri Modi highlighted that previously, crores of women lacked access to essential amenities such as electricity, LPG gas, and toilets. These critical facilities have now been provided by the government, significantly improving the lives of mothers and sisters in rural and economically disadvantaged families.

The Prime Minister highlighted that earlier, many women were compelled to conceal their health issues, often avoiding hospital visits during pregnancy due to financial concerns. He emphasized that the Ayushman Bharat scheme has alleviated this burden, enabling them to receive free treatment up to ₹5 lakh in hospitals. He stressed that alongside education and healthcare, financial independence is critical for women’s empowerment. He noted that when a woman has her own income, her self-respect grows, and her involvement in household decision-making strengthens. The Prime Minister underscored the government’s continuous efforts over the past 11 years to economically empower women. He pointed out that before 2014, over 30 crore women did not have a bank account. The government facilitated the opening of Jan Dhan accounts for them, where funds from various schemes are now being directly transferred. He remarked that women across rural and urban areas are increasingly engaged in work and self-employment, supported by the Mudra Yojana, which provides collateral-free loans. “More than 75% of Mudra’s beneficiaries are women”, said the Prime Minister, demonstrating the initiative’s impact on financial inclusion.

Emphasising that 10 crore women across the country are now part of self-help groups, actively creating new sources of income with substantial financial support from the government, Shri Modi underscored the commitment to empowering 3 crore women as Lakhpati Didis and expressed satisfaction that more than 1.5 crore women have already achieved this milestone. He noted the role of Bank Sakhis, who are connecting people with banking services in villages, and emphasized the government’s initiative to establish Bima Sakhis, stressing that women and daughters are now playing a significant role in expanding insurance coverage nationwide.

The Prime Minister highlighted that there was a time when women were kept away from emerging technologies. He emphasized that the country has moved beyond that era, ensuring that women actively participate in technological advancements and stated that the government is committed to enabling women and daughters to take leadership roles in modern technology. He pointed to the drone revolution in agriculture, underscoring that rural women are leading this transformation. “Namo Drone Didi initiative is boosting the confidence of rural women and enhancing their income opportunities and creating a unique identity for them”, remarked the Prime Minister.

Underlining that a large number of daughters across the country are pursuing careers as scientists, doctors, engineers, and pilots, Shri Modi emphasized that the enrollment of girls in science and mathematics education is steadily increasing. “Today, a large number of women scientists are working in all our major space missions”, said Shri Modi, mentioning that over 100 women scientists and engineers contributed to the Chandrayaan-3 mission. He further remarked on the remarkable contributions of women in the startup sector, pointing out that nearly 45% of startups in India have at least one woman as a director and this number continues to rise.

Emphasising the government’s commitment to increasing women's participation in policymaking, the Prime Minister highlighted the progressive steps taken over the past decade to achieve this goal. He noted that for the first time, India has had a full-time woman Defence Minister and a woman Finance Minister. He further emphasized that the representation of women from panchayats to Parliament has steadily increased, with 75 women currently serving as Members of Parliament. The Prime Minister stressed the importance of further enhancing this participation, underscoring that the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam embodies this vision. He remarked that while this legislation faced delays for years, the government successfully ensured its passage, solidifying women's reservation in Parliament and legislative assemblies. He reaffirmed that their government is empowering women at every level and in every sector.

“India is a land of deep-rooted culture and traditions, where sindoor symbolizes feminine strength”, emphasised Shri Modi, mentioning that even Lord Hanuman, immersed in devotion to Lord Ram, adorned himself with sindoor, and it is offered in shakti puja rituals. “Sindoor has now become a symbol of India's valor”, said Shri Modi.

Referring to the attack in Pahalgam, he stated that the terrorists not only shed the blood of Indians but also struck at the nation’s cultural ethos and attempted to divide society. Most significantly, they challenged India's Nari Shakti and this challenge proved fatal for the terrorists and their handlers. “Operation Sindoor is India's largest and most successful counter-terrorism operation in history”, emphasised Shri Modi, highlighting that at locations where Pakistan’s forces never anticipated action, Indian armed forces dismantled terrorist bases. He remarked that Operation Sindoor has sent a clear message that proxy wars through terrorism will not be tolerated. He stressed that India will not only eliminate threats within its territory but will also ensure a heavy price is paid by those supporting terrorists. “Every Indian now echoes the same sentiment, if you fire bullets, you will face artillery shells”, said Shri Modi.

“Operation Sindoor stands as a testament to the strength and valor of India’s Nari Shakti”, stressed the Prime Minister. He highlighted the crucial role played by the Border Security Force (BSF) in this operation, noting that from Jammu to Punjab, Rajasthan, and Gujarat, a significant number of BSF women personnel were at the frontlines. He commended their resolute response to cross-border firing and their active participation in command and control centers, as well as in eliminating enemy positions. The Prime Minister remarked that the world is witnessing the capability of India’s daughters in national defense. He emphasized that over the past decade, the government has undertaken several measures to strengthen women's role in security forces. He pointed out that the doors of Sainik Schools have been opened for girls, marking a historic step. He noted that in 2014, only 25% of National Cadet Corps (NCC) cadets were female, whereas today, their participation is increasing towards 50%. The Prime Minister celebrated a landmark moment as the first batch of women cadets passed out from the National Defence Academy (NDA). He emphasized that women are now serving at forward positions in the Army, Navy, and Air Force. He further highlighted that women officers are showcasing their courage and leadership from fighter jets to the INS Vikrant warship, demonstrating their growing role in India’s defense forces.

Highlighting a recent demonstration of courage by the women of the Indian Navy, referencing the Navika Sagar Parikrama, Shri Modi noted that two brave women officers completed a nearly 250-day maritime journey, circumnavigating the globe. He emphasized the remarkable feat of covering thousands of kilometers using a sailboat powered solely by wind, enduring prolonged periods at sea without sight of land. He acknowledged the severe weather conditions and storms they overcame, showcasing their resilience. Shri Modi remarked that their achievement is a testament to the ability of India’s daughters to conquer even the most formidable challenges. He underscored their growing role in safeguarding the nation, whether in anti-Naxal operations or countering cross-border threats. From the land of Devi Ahilyabai, he once again saluted the strength and determination of India’s Nari Shakti.

The Prime Minister emphasized that during her reign, Devi Ahilyabai not only advanced development but also preserved India's heritage. He underscored that modern India is following the same path, balancing progress with cultural preservation. He highlighted the nation's commitment to accelerating infrastructure development, citing today's program as an example. Noting that Madhya Pradesh has received its first metro service, marking a significant milestone, the Prime Minister remarked that Indore, already recognized globally for its cleanliness, will now be identified by its metro as well. He added metro construction in Bhopal is also progressing rapidly. The Prime Minister noted that the central government recently approved the expansion of the Ratlam-Nagda route to four lines, facilitating increased train movement and reducing congestion. Additionally, he highlighted the government's approval of the Indore-Manmad rail project, further enhancing connectivity and infrastructure in the region. The Prime Minister announced that Datia and Satna have now been integrated into the country's air travel network, improving connectivity across the Bundelkhand and Vindhya regions. He emphasized that this development will facilitate easier access to sacred sites such as Maa Pitambara, Maa Sharda Devi, and the revered Chitrakoot Dham.

"India stands at a pivotal moment in history, where the nation must work simultaneously on its security, strength, and cultural heritage", exclaimed Shri Modi, stressing the importance of increased efforts and highlighted the significant role of Matrushakti—India's mothers, sisters, and daughters—in shaping the country's future. He invoked the inspiration of Lokmata Ahilyabai, alongside the legacy of great women leaders such as Rani Lakshmibai, Rani Durgavati, Rani Kamalapati, Avantibai Lodhi, Kittur Rani Chennamma, Rani Gaidinliu, Velu Nachiyar, and Savitribai Phule. He noted that each of these names fills the nation with pride. Expressing hope that the 300th birth anniversary of Lokmata Ahilyabai will continue to inspire generations, Shri Modi concluded by urging the nation to strengthen the foundations of a Sashakt Bharat for the centuries to come.

The Governor of Madhya Pradesh, Shri Mangubhai Chhaganbhai Patel, Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh, Shri Mohan Yadav were present among other dignitaries at the event.

## Background

Prime Minister participated in Lokmata Devi Ahilyabai Mahila Sashaktikaran Mahasammelan and released a commemorative postage stamp and a special coin dedicated to Lokmata Devi Ahilyabai. The Rs 300 coin will feature a portrait of Ahilyabai Holkar. He also presented the National Devi Ahilyabai Award to a woman artist for contribution in tribal, folk, and traditional arts.

In a major boost to last mile air connectivity, Prime Minister inaugurated Datia and Satna airports, opening new opportunities for industry, tourism, education, and healthcare in the Vindhya region.

In line with his commitment to improve travel infrastructure in the cities, Prime Minister inaugurated passenger services on the Super Priority Corridor of the Yellow Line of Indore Metro. It is expected to reduce traffic and pollution while offering a comfortable commute to passengers.

Prime Minister transferred the first installment for the construction of 1,271 Atal Gram Sushasan Bhawans worth over Rs 480 crore. These buildings will provide permanent infrastructure to gram panchayats, helping them manage administrative functions, conduct meetings, and maintain records more efficiently.

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