

DISCIPLINE



# **Important Issues of the Day**

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# Constitution Amendment Bill, part of delimitation package, defeated

The Bill falls short of the two-thirds mark of 352 votes, with 298 in favour and 230 against in the House where 528 members were present at the time of voting; Home Minister Amit Shah warns Opposition that it will face the 'wrath of women' voters

**Sobhana K. Nair**  
**Sreeparna Chakrabarty**  
NEW DELHI

**A** united Opposition on Friday defeated the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026, which sought to redistribute Lok Sabha seats on the basis of the 2011 Census to expedite the implementation of women's reservation.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah accused the Opposition of playing "ruthless politics" and warned that it would face the "wrath of women" voters. A total of 298 members voted in favour of the Bill and 230 against it, with the House strength at the time of voting being 528. It failed to meet the two-thirds majority mark of 352 required for a Constitution Amend-

## Opposition joins hands

Opposition parties defeated a Constitution Amendment Bill which sought to implement delimitation and increase Lok Sabha seats based on the 2011 Census

Category	Number of MPs	Share
In favour	298	56.4%
Against	230	43.6%
Abstentions	0	0%
Total present and voting	528	100%
Required (2/3 <sup>rd</sup> majority)	352	66.7%

ment Bill to pass.

Following the defeat, the government withdrew two allied legislations – the Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026, and the Delimitation Bill, 2026 – which were linked to the constitutional amendment.

The government extended the Budget Session after

a short interlude for deliberating on these Bills.

Mr. Shah said that the legislative package of three Bills was aimed at fulfilling two objectives – time-bound implementation of the women's reservation Bill for the 2029 general election and to apply the "foundational" democratic principle of "one person,

one vote and one value".

Maintaining that the government remained committed to women's reservation, Mr. Shah said this was the "fifth time" that parties of the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance had stalled the legislation.

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, in a post



**House vote:** Members of Parliament vote on the Constitution Amendment Bill, which was part of a delimitation legislative package, during a special session in New Delhi on Friday. PTI

on X, described the government's move to link women's reservation with delimitation based on the 2011 Census as a "hollow attempt" by Prime Minister Narendra Modi to project himself as the "messiah of women".

Responding to a key Opposition objection that the Bill lacked an explicit guarantee that representation of all States in the Lok Sabha would rise uniformly by 50%, Mr. Shah offered to move an amendment incorporating this assurance if the House agreed to suspend proceedings for an hour.

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- **Union Home Minister Amit Shah accused the Opposition of playing “ruthless politics” and warned that it would face the “wrath of women” voters. A total of 298 members voted in favour of the Bill and 230 against it, with the House strength at the time of voting being 528. It failed to meet the two-thirds majority mark of 352 required for a Constitution Amendment Bill to pass.**
- **Following the defeat, the government withdrew two allied legislations — the Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026, and the Delimitation Bill, 2026 — which were linked to the constitutional amendment.**
- **The government extended the Budget Session after a short interlude for deliberating on these Bills.**

- **Article 81, pertaining to ‘Composition of the House of the People’, provides for the Lok Sabha consisting of “...not more than 530 members chosen by direct election from territorial constituencies in the States, and ... not more than 20 members to represent the UTs, chosen in such manner as Parliament may by law provide”.**
- **Article 82, which provides for ‘Readjustment after each census’, states that upon the completion of each census, the allocation of Lok Sabha seats to the States and the division of each State into territorial constituencies “shall be readjusted by such authority and in such manner as Parliament may by law determine”.**

- **Article 368 in Part XX of the Constitution deals with the power of parliament to amend the constitution and its procedures.**
- **It states that the Parliament may amend the Constitution by way of addition, variation or repeal of any provision in accordance with the procedure laid down for the purpose.**
- **However, the Parliament cannot amend those provisions which form the 'basic structure' of the Constitution. This was ruled by the Supreme Court in the Kesavananda Bharati case (1973).**
- **It provides for two types of amendments, that is, by a special majority of Parliament and the special majority of parliament along with the ratification of half of the states legislatures by a simple majority.**

- **Amendment can be initiated only by the introduction of a bill for the purpose in either house of the Parliament**
- **The bill can be introduced either by a minister or by a private member and does not require the permission of the President**
- **The bill must be passed in each house by a special majority, that is, a majority of the total membership of the house and a majority of two-thirds of the members of the house present and voting**
- **Each house must pass the bill separately. If there is any disagreement, there is no provision for joint sitting of the houses**

- **If the bill seeks to amend the provisions of the constitution, it must be ratified by the legislatures of half of the states by a simple majority**
- **After passage of the bill by both the houses, it is presented to the President for his assent**
- **The president must give his assent to the bill. He can neither withhold his assent to the bill nor return the bill for reconsideration of the Parliament**
- **After the President's assent, the bill becomes an act**

**Consider the following statements: (UPSC CSE, 2013)**

- 1. An amendment to the Constitution of India can be initiated by an introduction of a bill in the Lok Sabha only.**
- 2. If such an amendment seeks to make changes in the federal character of the Constitution, the amendment also requires to be ratified by the legislature of all the States of India.**

**Which of the statements given above is/are correct?**

- (a) 1 only**
- (b) 2 only**
- (c) Both 1 and 2**
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2**

**Consider the following statements: (UPSC CSE, 2022)**

- 1. A bill amending the Constitution requires a prior recommendation of the President of India.**
- 2. When a Constitution Amendment Bill is presented to the President of India, it is obligatory for the President of India to give his/her assent.**
- 3. A Constitution Amendment Bill must be passed by both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha by a special majority and there is no provision for joint sitting.**

**Which of the statements given above are correct?**

- (a) 1 and 2 only**
- (b) 2 and 3 only**
- (c) 1 and 3 only**
- (d) 1, 2 and 3**

# SC warns Rajasthan, M.P., U.P. over illegal mining in Chambal sanctuary

**Krishnadas Rajagopal**  
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday said it would not hesitate to take the extraordinary step of deploying paramilitary forces to curb illegal sand mining in the ecologically fragile and protected National Chambal Gharial Sanctuary if the States of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh fail to take “concrete measures” to tackle the menace within a month, by the next date of hearing on May 11.

The warning was part of a 28-page order passed by a Bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta, which took *suo motu* cognisance of illegal sand mining within the sanctuary, resulting in severe degradation of critical wildlife habitats, including that of the endangered gharials.

Justice Mehta, who pronounced the operative part of the order in the courtroom, cautioned that the court would not only impose a complete ban on sand mining in the States but also impose “heavy penalties” on them for failing to safeguard critical habi-



The degradation of natural resources and fragile ecosystems for short-term gains cannot be countenanced, the court said. FILE PHOTO

tats and the river ecosystem. “The continued degradation of natural resources and fragile ecosystems for short-term gains and greed, coupled with administrative indifference, cannot be countenanced in a system governed by the rule of law,” the court said.

The court said the States’ explanations about sand mining happening right under their very noses reeked of apathy, tacit connivance and even a sense of helplessness in the face of the “superior firepower” and acts of lawlessness of the miners. The order referred to brutal

murders of forest guards by sand miners in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan.

Issuing a series of directions, the court ordered Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh to install high-resolution and Wi-Fi enabled CCTV cameras in areas affected by sand mining and ensure that live visuals from these cameras are fed directly to the offices of the district police chiefs and divisional forest officers.

Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan should initiate a pilot project to install GPS tracking devices on vehicles used for mining in Morana and Dholpur districts.

- **The Supreme Court on Friday said it would not hesitate to take the extraordinary step of deploying paramilitary forces to curb illegal sand mining in the ecologically fragile and protected National Chambal Gharial Sanctuary if the States of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh fail to take “concrete measures” to tackle the menace within a month, by the next date of hearing on May 11.**
- **The warning was part of a 28-page order passed by a Bench of Justices Vikram Nath and Sandeep Mehta, which took suo motu cognisance of illegal sand mining within the sanctuary, resulting in severe degradation of critical wildlife habitats, including that of the endangered gharials.**
- **Justice Mehta, who pronounced the operative part of the order in the courtroom, cautioned that the court would not only impose a complete ban on sand mining in the States but also impose “heavy penalties” on them for failing to safeguard critical habitats and the river ecosystem.**

- **The National Chambal Sanctuary, also known as the National Chambal Gharial Wildlife Sanctuary, is one of India's most ecologically significant riverine protected areas. It is the first and only tri-state protected area (Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh) in the country, spanning approximately 5,400 sq km along a 600 km stretch of the Chambal River (960-km).**
- **Biodiversity: It harbors nearly 90% of the world's remaining wild Gharial population and a significant number of endangered Ganges River Dolphins. Other key species are Marsh crocodile (mugger), Red-crowned roof turtle, Smooth-coated otter, striped hyena, and over 330 bird species e.g., Indian skimmer.**
- **It forms part of India's Project Crocodile initiative launched in 1975 to address the severe decline of crocodilian populations.**
- **Conservation Status: It is recognized as an Important Bird Area (IBA). It is a proposed Ramsar Site, a candidate for UNESCO World Heritage Site status, and classified as an IUCN Category IV protected area (habitat/species management area).**

# Why women's reservation cannot wait any longer

India stands at a curious democratic crossroads. It is one of the world's most vibrant democracies, marked by high voter participation and an increasingly engaged female electorate. Yet within its legislative institutions, women remain conspicuously underrepresented. This contradiction – between participation and representation – makes a compelling case for the immediate implementation of the Women's Reservation Bill.

This gap has been repeatedly highlighted. While Indian women have emerged as a decisive electoral force, their presence in law-making bodies remains disproportionately low. Nowhere is this imbalance more evident than in the stark difference between State and national representation.

Women constitute, on average, only about 9% of legislators in State Assemblies, while their representation in Parliament hovers around 14%-15%. This is far from reflecting women's share in the total population of the country, which is nearly 50%.

This disparity is not just numerical – it is structural. Over the past two decades, women in India have transformed from passive voters into active political participants. In several States, female voter turnout now equals or even surpasses that of men. This is a remarkable democratic achievement. It signals agency, awareness, and a growing sense of political ownership among women. However, this surge in participation has not translated into equivalent gains in representation.

## Structural faults

The reasons are deeply embedded in the functioning of India's political system. Political parties act as gatekeepers, and continue to nominate far fewer women candidates than men. Electoral politics is resource-intensive, requiring financial backing, networks, and social capital – areas where women often face systemic disadvantages. Cultural norms and safety concerns further discourage women from entering the political arena. The result is a cycle of exclusion that reproduces itself with each election. This is precisely why the Women's Reservation Bill is not just desirable but necessary. By mandating a fixed share of seats for women in legislatures, it directly addresses the structural barriers that prevent fair representation. Critics often argue that such



**Shamika Ravi**  
Member, EAC-PM

High turnout among women voters is a sign of democratic vitality, but true empowerment requires a seat at the decision-making table

quotas compromise merit or lead to tokenism. But this argument assumes that the current system is meritocratic, which it clearly is not. Access to political power in India is shaped as much by privilege and networks as by competence.

Evidence from India's own experience with reservation at the local level offers a powerful counterpoint. In the Panchayati Raj institutions, where seats have been reserved for women, the results have been transformative. Women leaders have not only participated effectively but have also shifted policy priorities toward issues such as health, education, water, and sanitation. These are not marginal concerns; they are central to human development and economic progress.

Moreover, representation has a ripple effect. When women occupy positions of authority, they challenge entrenched social norms. Young girls grow up seeing leadership as attainable. Families and communities begin to accept women's public roles more readily, and over time, this creates a pipeline of future leaders. Reservation, therefore, is not a permanent solution but a catalytic intervention; one that helps correct historical imbalances and sets the stage for a more equitable system.

## On State legislatures and Parliament

The comparison between State Assemblies and Parliament further underscores the urgency of the reform.

If representation is as low as 9% at the State level, it indicates that the problem is even more severe at the grassroots of legislative power. State governments play a critical role in shaping policies around healthcare, education, law and order, and local development, which directly affect citizens' daily lives. The near absence of women in these decision-making bodies means that half the population has a limited voice in shaping them.

At the national level, the slightly higher figure of 14%-15% in Parliament is often cited as progress. But this too falls short of global benchmarks and democratic ideals. A representative democracy must reflect the diversity of its people, not just in theory but in practice. The underrepresentation of women weakens the legitimacy and inclusiveness of India's democratic institutions.

Timing is another crucial factor. India is undergoing rapid social and economic

transformation. More women are entering higher education, joining the workforce, and asserting their rights. Their aspirations are evolving faster than the institutions meant to represent them. Delaying the implementation of the Women's Reservation Bill risks widening this gap, and will lead to frustration and disengagement.

Some argue that political parties should voluntarily field more women candidates instead of relying on legislative mandates. While this is a desirable goal, past experience suggests that voluntary measures have not been effective. Despite repeated promises, the proportion of women candidates has remained low. Structural problems require structural solutions, and reservation is one such solution.

## Deepening democracy

At its core, the argument for the Women's Reservation Bill is about deepening democracy. High turnout among women voters is a sign of democratic vitality, but true empowerment requires a seat at the decision-making table. Moving from participation to representation is the next logical step in India's democratic evolution.

There is also a strong developmental argument. Research across countries shows that gender-inclusive governance leads to better outcomes – more equitable policies, improved social indicators, and sustainable growth. In a country as diverse and complex as India, excluding half the population from political leadership is not just unjust, it is inefficient.

India has already shown that institutional reform can drive social change. The success of reservation in local governance demonstrates that change is possible when there is political will. Extending this principle to State Assemblies and Parliament is not a radical step, it is a necessary progression. Ultimately, the question is not whether India is ready for the Women's Reservation Bill, it is whether its democracy can afford to wait any longer for women's reservation; the gap between participation and representation is too large to ignore.

India's democratic journey has been remarkable, but it remains incomplete.

Bridging this gap requires bold action.

Implementing the Women's Reservation Bill immediately is not just about fairness – it is about building a more representative, responsive, and resilient democracy.

- **India stands at a curious democratic crossroads. It is one of the world's most vibrant democracies, marked by high voter participation and an increasingly engaged female electorate. Yet within its legislative institutions, women remain conspicuously underrepresented.**
- **This contradiction — between participation and representation — makes a compelling case for the immediate implementation of the Women's Reservation Bill.**
- **Women constitute, on average, only about 9% of legislators in State Assemblies, while their representation in Parliament hovers around 14%-15%. This is far from reflecting women's share in the total population of the country, which is nearly 50%.**
- **Over the past two decades, women in India have transformed from passive voters into active political participants.**

- **By mandating a fixed share of seats for women in legislatures, it directly addresses the structural barriers that prevent fair representation.**
- **Evidence from India's own experience with reservation at the local level offers a powerful counterpoint. In the Panchayati Raj institutions, where seats have been reserved for women, the results have been transformative.**
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- **India's democratic journey has been remarkable, but it remains incomplete.**

**Consider the following statements regarding 'Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam' :**

- 1. Provisions will come into effect from 18th Lok Sabha.**
- 2. This will be in force for 15 years after becoming an Act.**
- 3. There are provisions for the reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes Women within the quota reserved for the Scheduled Castes.**

**Which of the statements given above are correct?**

- [A] 1, 2 and 3**
- [B] 1 and 2 only**
- [C] 2 and 3 only**
- [D] 1 and 3 only**

## Mains Question

“Women’s representation in decision-making bodies is not merely a matter of equality but a prerequisite for inclusive governance.”

Discuss in the context of Indian society.

“निर्णय लेने वाली संस्थाओं में महिलाओं का प्रतिनिधित्व केवल समानता का प्रश्न नहीं, बल्कि समावेशी शासन की अनिवार्यता है।”

भारतीय समाज के संदर्भ में चर्चा कीजिए।

## Temporary truce

The U.S.-Israel ceasefire with Iran must hold across all fronts

**T**he 10-day ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon, announced by U.S. President Donald Trump on Thursday, could strengthen the fragile two-week truce between the U.S. and Iran and improve the prospects for a broader diplomatic settlement. The war in Lebanon, launched on March 2, on the third day of the U.S.-Israel war on Iran, has been a key sticking point in U.S.-Iran talks. When Mr. Trump announced the ceasefire with Tehran on April 8, both Iran and Pakistan, which mediated the truce, said the agreement also covered Lebanon. A ceasefire on all fronts was one of the 10 points Iran submitted to the U.S. as a framework for ending the war. But Israel, apparently dissatisfied with the U.S.-Iran deal, rejected a ceasefire with Lebanon and stepped up attacks, killing at least 200 people within 24 hours of the U.S.-Iran truce taking effect. Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, who travelled to Islamabad to hold direct talks with a U.S. delegation headed by Vice President J.D. Vance, insisted that a ceasefire in Lebanon was a precondition for advancing diplomacy. The Islamabad talks failed to produce a breakthrough, but both sides remained engaged, communicating through Pakistan.

Yet, despite the truce, a fundamental problem

remains. The war in Lebanon is not between Israel and the Lebanese army, but between Israel and Hezbollah. Hezbollah has not been part of the talks. Some Hezbollah leaders have said the party would halt attacking Israel if Israeli strikes stop. The Shia militant group has been weakened but is far from defeated. Israel has also said it would not withdraw troops from the territory it has seized in southern Lebanon, while Hezbollah insists on a return to pre-March 2 positions. Mr. Netanyahu says there is a 'historic opportunity' for a peace deal with Lebanon, but any such agreement is unlikely to include Hezbollah, which remains stronger than the Lebanese army and retains an extensive political and social network. While the ceasefire is now in effect, peace remains elusive. The wars on Iran and Lebanon should serve as a reminder to Israel of its own limitations. Mr. Netanyahu sought regime change in Iran and the disarmament of Hezbollah in Lebanon. As the U.S.-Israeli push for regime change in Iran faltered, prompting Mr. Trump to seek a negotiated exit from the Iran mess, Israel's war with Hezbollah has also run into a wall. The ceasefire reflects this ground reality. If Mr. Trump wants a durable negotiated settlement with Iran based on a give-and-take formula, he must ensure that the ceasefire is sustained across all fronts.

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- **If Mr. Trump wants a durable negotiated settlement with Iran based on a give-and-take formula, he must ensure that the ceasefire is sustained across all fronts.**

CAFE-III norms

# Green Goal

BUREAU OF ENERGY  
EFFICIENCY PROPOSALS

**91.7 gm CO<sub>2</sub>/km**

CAFE\* 3

**70 gm CO<sub>2</sub>/km**

CAFE 4

(\*Corporate average  
fuel efficiency)

**5 Years:** Extended  
time for auto cos  
to shift to **CAFE 4**



## EXPLAINER

CAFE norms  
applicable on  
entire fleet

They limit carbon  
emissions from total  
number of vehicles  
sold by a carmaker  
in fiscal year

Manufacturers  
face penalties for  
non-compliance  
with set limits

- **The Indian government and the automobile industry reached a broad consensus on the upcoming CAFE-III (Corporate Average Fuel Efficiency Phase III).**
- **CAFE (Corporate Average Fuel Efficiency) norms are government-mandated standards that regulate the weighted average fuel consumption and CO<sub>2</sub> emissions of an automaker's entire fleet, rather than individual models.**
- **Established By: The Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) under the Ministry of Power.**
- **Application: These norms apply to M1 category passenger vehicles (those designed to seat up to nine persons and weighing under 3,500kg).**
- **Timeline: The third phase (CAFE-III) is scheduled to be implemented from April 1, 2027, and will run through March 31, 2032.**

- To reduce India's heavy reliance on crude oil imports, especially critical during geopolitical uncertainties like the West Asia crisis.
- To nudge manufacturers toward producing energy-efficient and less-polluting vehicles in line with India's climate goals.
- To force the adoption of advanced technologies such as hybrids, electric vehicles (EVs), and flex-fuel systems.
  
- **Stricter Targets:** Automakers must reduce their average fleet CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from approximately 113 g/km (at the end of CAFE-II in FY27) to 78.9 g/km by FY32.
- **Removal of Small Car Carve-out:** An earlier proposal to give a specific 3g/km relief to petrol cars under 909kg has been scrapped in favor of the flatter curve to ensure a fairer playing field.
- **Super Credit Scheme:** To encourage green technology, manufacturers earn multipliers for every clean vehicle sold:
  - **Battery EVs (BEV):** 3.0 multiplier (each sale counts as 3 for fleet average).
  - **Plug-in Hybrids (PHEV):** 2.5 multiplier.
  - **Strong Hybrids:** 1.6 multiplier.

- Representation without empowerment is an illusion.
- प्रतिनिधित्व बिना सशक्तिकरण केवल एक भ्रम है।
- The road to development must pass through gender justice.
- विकास का मार्ग लैंगिक न्याय से होकर गुजरता है।
- Technology can bridge gaps, but it can also deepen divides.
- प्रौद्योगिकी दूरी कम कर सकती है, लेकिन असमानता भी बढ़ा सकती है।

Thank You!

