

The Hindu Important News Articles & Editorial For UPSC CSE

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Page 01 :GS II : Indian Polity / Prelims Exam

On April 17, 2026, the Indian Parliament witnessed a significant legislative event as the **United Opposition defeated the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill**. This Bill was the cornerstone of a three-bill package intended to redraw India's electoral map and operationalize women's reservation. Despite a simple majority (298 in favour, 230 against), the government failed to secure the **special majority**—two-thirds of members present and voting—required under **Article 368** for constitutional amendments. Consequently, the government withdrew the associated **Delimitation Bill, 2026**, and the **Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026**.

United Opposition defeats Delimitation Bill

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, claims opposition to delimitation meant opposition to increasing the number of seats for SCs/STs

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 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.

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 post

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 rd majority)	352	66.7%



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.

Senior Congress leader and Kerala MP K.C. Venugopal countered this offer with two conditions: that not only should the provision be written into the Bill, but the government should also introduce a separate amendment delinking the implementation of women's reserva-

tion from delimitation. Mr. Shah rejected the second demand, calling it a "trap". He and Prime Minister Narendra Modi had earlier given verbal assurances that all States would see a uniform 50% increase in Lok Sabha seats as the House goes from the current cap of 550 to about 850 members.

Mr. Shah accused the Opposition of manufacturing a north-south divide by propagating what he called

South made its voice heard, says Stalin

CHENNAI
After the Bill, introduced by the BJP-led Union government, was defeated in the Lok Sabha, DMK president and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M. K. Stalin said the South stood united, made its voice heard and democracy prevailed. **>> PAGE 3**

a false narrative that southern States would lose Parliamentary representation. "Southern States have equal rights in this House as northern States. In fact, Lakshadweep has the same rights as Uttar Pradesh or Bihar," he said. Lakshadweep has fewer than 50,000 voters.

Making a strong pitch for delimitation, Mr. Shah argued that the principle of "one person, one vote, one value" has been violat-

ed due to the freeze based on the 1971 Census. He pointed out that India's population has grown from about 54.79 crore then to nearly 140 crore in 2026, leading to stark disparities in constituency sizes. Citing Malkajgiri in Telangana, which has about 48 lakh voters, he asked how a single MP could represent such a large electorate. Mr. Shah also argued that opposition to delimitation effectively meant opposition to increasing the number of seats reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

He also addressed Opposition allegations that the government was trying to sidestep the ongoing caste count while implementing women's reservation.

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Key Legislative Objectives of the Bill

The Bill sought to decouple the implementation of women's reservation from the upcoming 2027 Census and instead link it to a delimitation exercise based on the **2011 Census**. The primary goals were:

Expansion of Parliament: Increasing the Lok Sabha strength from 543 to approximately **850 seats**.

Women's Reservation: Implementing a 33% quota for women in the 2029 General Elections.

Democratic Parity: Upholding the principle of **"One Person, One Vote, One Value"** by correcting the disparity where some MPs represent far larger electorates than others due to the seat freeze based on the 1971 Census.

Social Representation: Increasing seats for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) in proportion to their updated population.

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Daily News Analysis

Core Issues and Arguments

Stakeholder	Arguments / Concerns
Union Government	Argued that the 1971 freeze is outdated; population growth (54 cr to 140 cr) necessitates redrawing boundaries. Claimed that expansion ensures no state loses absolute seats.
Opposition (INDIA Bloc)	Alleged a "North-South divide," fearing that states with successful population control (primarily Southern) would see their relative political weight diminish compared to Northern states.
Federalism Concerns	Critics argued that linking women's reservation to delimitation was a "trap" to force a demographic-based redistribution of power before a national consensus is reached.
Data Validity	Questioned the use of the 2011 Census (15 years old) for an exercise in 2026, especially when the 2026-27 Census is already underway.

Constitutional & Political Dimensions

1. Article 368 and the Special Majority

The defeat highlights the "checks and balances" in the Indian Constitution. For a Constitutional Amendment Bill to pass:

It must be passed in each House by a majority of the **total membership** of that House.

It must be passed by a majority of **not less than two-thirds** of the members of that House **present and voting**. In this case, with 528 members present, the required mark was **352**, but the government only secured **298**.

2. The Delimitation Dilemma (Article 82)

Delimitation is the act of redrawing boundaries of Lok Sabha and Assembly seats. While it ensures democratic equality, it creates a federal friction. States like Tamil Nadu and Kerala fear "punishment" for their developmental success in controlling population, while states like Uttar Pradesh would gain significantly in a purely population-based redistribution.

3. One Person, One Vote, One Value

This is a core tenet of representative democracy. Currently, an MP in Malkajgiri (Telangana) represents ~48 lakh voters, while an MP in Lakshadweep represents fewer than 50,000. The government argues this violates **Article 14** (Equality before law) and the democratic spirit.

Conclusion

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The defeat of the 131st Amendment Bill marks the first time a major constitutional initiative of the current administration has been stalled on the floor of the House. While the government portrays this as a "betrayal of women," the Opposition sees it as a "victory for federalism."

UPSC Prelims Exam Practice Question

Ques:The principle of "One Person, One Vote, One Value" is most closely associated with:

- (a) Directive Principles of State Policy
- (b) Equality before law
- (c) Parliamentary privileges
- (d) Federal structure

Ans: b)

UPSC Mains Exam Practice Question

Ques: Critically analyze the implications of linking women's reservation with delimitation. Is such linkage constitutionally justified and politically feasible? **150 Words)**

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Page 06: GS II : Indian Polity / Prelims Exam

The defeat of the **Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026** represents a pivotal moment in Indian parliamentary history. Designed to facilitate **delimitation** (the redrawing of electoral boundaries) and pave the way for **women's reservation**, the Bill failed to clear the "Special Majority" hurdle mandated by **Article 368**. While the government secured a simple majority, it fell 54 votes short of the required 352 (two-thirds of members present and voting). This outcome has forced the government to shelve its entire legislative package on electoral reform.

Critical Points of Contention

The failure of the Bill stems from a deep-seated distrust between the Treasury and Opposition benches regarding the **Federal Balance** of India.

The "North-South" Divide: The Bill proposed using the **2011 Census** for delimitation. Since Southern and Eastern states have been more successful in population control, a population-linked redistribution would have seen their relative seat share shrink, while Northern "Hindi heartland" states would have gained significantly.

Text vs. Verbal Assurances: While the Home Minister offered a verbal guarantee of a **uniform 50% seat increase** for all states, the written text of the Bill still prioritized population-based delimitation. The Opposition argued that if a proportional increase was the intent, it should have been explicitly written into the Bill from the outset.

Unnecessary Linking: A core criticism was the decision to link **Women's Reservation**—a policy with broad cross-party support—to **Delimitation**, a highly controversial and divisive structural change. Critics viewed this as a "smoke-and-mirrors" tactic to force the Opposition into a difficult corner.

Parliamentary Dynamics and the "Safeguard"

The event underscored the importance of the **Two-Thirds Majority** requirement. This constitutional safeguard is designed to prevent a dominant executive from pushing through fundamental structural changes without building a broad national consensus.

Party Stance	Reasoning/Logic
INDIA Bloc (Opp.)	Voted as a unified front (Congress, SP, TMC, DMK, Left). Argued the Bill was "methodical madness" that would penalize states for developmental success.
NDA & Allies (Govt.)	Supported the Bill on the principle of "One Person, One Vote, One Value." Argued that current constituency sizes are unmanageable.

Deservedly dead

A ramrod approach to delimitation was bound to fail

In what was a foregone conclusion, the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026 failed to secure the two-thirds majority required for a constitutional amendment. While 298 members voted in its favour and 230 against, the Bill needed 352 votes – two-thirds of the 528 present and voting – to pass. The government subsequently shelved the companion Delimitation Bill and the Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill, saying they could not be viewed in isolation. During his reply to the debate, Home Minister Amit Shah gave a verbal guarantee that southern States would see their presence in an 816-member Lok Sabha increase in the same proportion as their current share, even offering to adjourn the House for an hour to redraft the Bill with a 50% uniform increase as an official amendment. The Opposition dismissed this. The obvious question: if proportional increase was always the intent, why was it not in the Bill? The language as tabled clearly mandated delimitation on the basis of the latest Census – currently 2011 – which would have reduced the share of southern, eastern, and northeastern States due to their lower population growth relative to the Hindi heartland States. Why the haste to push through a controversial constitutional amendment when the 2026-27 Census is still under way? Also, there was no reason to link women's reservation, on which there is all-party consensus, to delimitation in this manner. The bizarre smoke-and-mirrors approach, no doubt intended to confuse and divide the Opposition, made a mockery of the parliamentary process.

It is to the credit of the INDIA bloc that it voted as one against this methodical madness; overlooking their differences, parties such as the Congress, the Samajwadi Party, the Trinamool Congress, the Left and the DMK ensured floor coordination. Conversely, one must note the naivety of the Telugu Desam Party and the AIADMK, which spoke in favour of the Bill, on the strength of the Home Minister's verbal assurances despite the conflicting language in the text, when Andhra Pradesh stood to lose five seats and Tamil Nadu 11 under the Bill's own terms. This defeat should chasten the government. It would now have to implement women's reservation through the constitutionally mandated route: complete the 2026-27 Census, and refer delimitation and Lok Sabha expansion to a parliamentary committee for genuine consensus. The two-thirds threshold exists precisely to prevent far-reaching structural changes from being rammed through without broad agreement and this safeguard held today.

Daily News Analysis

Party Stance	Reasoning/Logic
TDP & AIADMK	Supported the Bill based on verbal assurances of seat protection, despite technical projections suggesting their states (Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu) stood to lose relative influence.

The Path Forward

The defeat of this Bill shifts the focus toward the "**Constitutionally Mandated Route**":

Completion of Census 2026-27: Any legitimate delimitation exercise must be based on current data rather than the 15-year-old 2011 figures.

Delinking Reservation: There is a growing demand to implement the **Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam** (Women's Reservation) immediately, without making it contingent on the redrawing of seats.

The Delimitation Commission: Future attempts will likely require a **Parliamentary Committee** or a high-powered commission to find a formula that balances democratic representation (population) with federal parity (protecting states that controlled population).

Conclusion

The "Ramrod approach" to such a sensitive issue as delimitation was ultimately rejected by the legislative process. The defeat suggests that for permanent changes to India's democratic architecture, the government cannot rely on verbal assurances or political pressure alone; it requires **procedural transparency** and **genuine consensus-building**. The safeguard of the Special Majority held firm, ensuring that the federal structure of the Union remains protected for now.

UPSC Prelims Exam Practice Question

Ques: The primary purpose of requiring a “special majority” for constitutional amendments is to:

- (a) Strengthen the powers of the executive
- (b) Ensure quick legislative decision-making
- (c) Build broad political consensus for structural changes
- (d) Limit judicial review

Ans:c)

UPSC Mains Exam Practice Question

Ques: Discuss the challenges associated with delimitation in India. How does it create tensions between democratic equality and federal balance? **(150 Words)**



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In News : Prelims Exam :

The Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) recently warned of severe ecological degradation of Hokersar Lake, with over 2,500 kanals encroached.



About Hokersar Lake

Hokersar, also known as Hokera, is a large natural wetland near Srinagar in Jammu and Kashmir.

It spans 13.75 sq.km. and rests at 1,585 meters above sea level.

The wetland lies in the Jhelum River basin and receives water mainly from the Doodhganga River (a tributary of Jhelum).

It is located in the northwest Himalayan biogeographic province of Kashmir, behind the snow-draped Pir Panchal.

It is the largest bird sanctuary in the Kashmir Valley and a designated Ramsar site, recognized for its international ecological importance.

It serves as a critical habitat and resting place for various migratory waterbirds from Siberia, Central Asia, and Northern Europe, hosting around 68 waterfowl species, including some endangered ones.

Hokersar is rich in aquatic vegetation such as reedbeds and water chestnuts, which provide food and shelter for fish and birds.

Apart from biodiversity conservation, the wetland acts as a floodwater absorption basin and supports local livelihoods.

However, it faces threats from human encroachment, pollution, and conversion to agriculture, which have reduced its size over time.

UPSC Prelims Exam Practice Question

Ques: Hokersar Lake, recently seen in news, is located in:

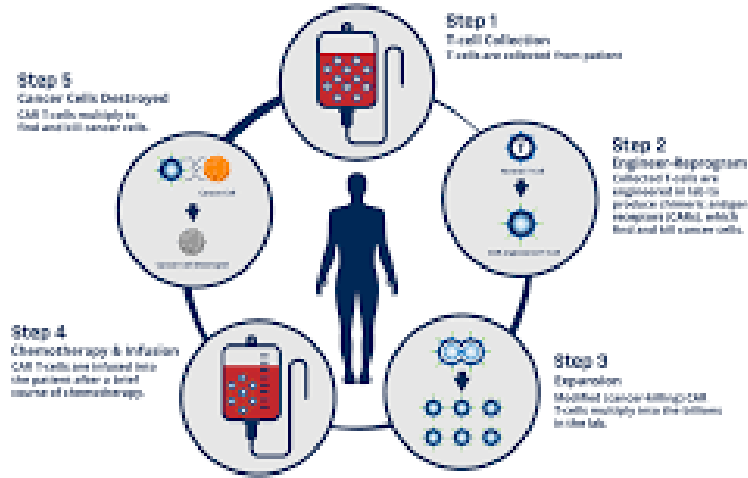
- (a) Himachal Pradesh
- (b) Uttarakhand
- (c) Jammu & Kashmir
- (d) Punjab

Ans:c)

In News GS III : Science and Tech / Prelims Exam

For the first time, scientists have used a cutting-edge cell therapy called CAR-T to treat a patient with three different life-threatening autoimmune diseases that had resisted years of treatment.

How Does CAR T-Cell Therapy Work?



About CAR-T Cell Therapy

CAR T-cell therapy, or chimeric antigen receptor T-cell therapy, is an advanced form of immunotherapy used to treat certain types of cancer by modifying a patient's own immune cells to fight the disease.

This treatment is designed for specific types of blood cancer and is given to patients whose cancer has either relapsed or not responded to first-line treatment.

How does CAR-T Cell Therapy Work?

For any CAR T-cell therapy, a patient's immune T cells are collected by filtering their blood.

T cells, also known as T lymphocytes, are a type of white blood cell.

T cells are key players in the body's immune system because of their ability to identify and attack cells that don't belong in the body, such as germs and cancer cells.

In the lab, these T cells are modified to produce synthetic proteins called chimeric antigen receptors (CARs).

The modified cells are called CAR-T cells. The cells are grown to much higher numbers in the lab and then infused back into the person's bloodstream.

The synthetic CARs allow the T cells to bind to specific proteins called antigens on cancer cells. This binding activates the T cells to kill the cancer cells.

Dying cancer cells trigger further immune responses against the cancer.

In addition, CAR-T cells can keep multiplying in the body, producing lasting anticancer results.

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In some cases, CAR T-cell therapy can cure blood cancer. Other times, it helps people with certain blood cancers live longer.

CAR-T cell therapy is used to treat cancers that affect blood cells. This includes

B-cell acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL).
Diffuse large B-cell lymphoma.
Follicular lymphoma.
High-grade B-cell lymphoma.
Mantle cell lymphoma
Multiple myeloma.
Primary mediastinal large B-cell lymphoma.

Side Effects:

A serious immune overreaction causing hyperinflammation and organ damage, seen in 12% of participants, resulting in at least one death.
Low red blood cell count, reported in 61% of participants, causing fatigue and weakness.
Thrombocytopenia: Low platelet count, increasing the risk of bleeding, reported in 65% of patients.
Neutropenia: Low neutrophil count, seen in 96% of participants, raising the risk of infections.

UPSC Prelims Exam Practice Question

Ques: CAR-T Cell Therapy is best described as:

- (a) A type of chemotherapy using chemical drugs
- (b) A gene-editing based immunotherapy using modified T-cells
- (c) A radiation-based cancer treatment
- (d) A stem cell transplantation technique

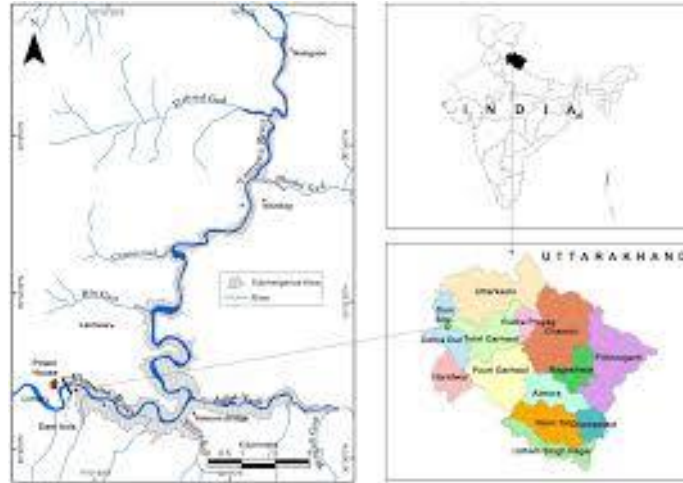
Ans: b)

UPSC Mains Exam Practice Question

Ques: Discuss the potential of CAR-T Cell Therapy in cancer treatment. What are the major challenges in its widespread adoption in India?(150 Words)

In News: Prelims Exam : Lakhwar Hydroelectric Project

North India's water and energy security is set to receive a significant boost as the 300 MW Lakhwar multipurpose project on the river Yamuna in the district Dehradun, Uttarakhand, gathers pace following a high-level review by the Secretary at Ministry of Jal Shakti.



About Lakhwar Hydroelectric Project

It is a multipurpose hydroelectric project planned on the Yamuna river near Lohari Village in the Dehradun District of Uttarakhand.

The main project components are a 204 m high concrete gravity dam, 3 steel-lined penstocks, and an underground powerhouse housing 3 vertical Francis turbines of 100 MW each.

The project is being developed and currently owned by Uttarakhand Jal Vidyut Nigam.

Hydroelectric Capacity: 300 MW (hydropower to be used by Uttarakhand)

Storage Capacity: 330.66 million cubic meters (MCM)

Irrigation Potential: 33,780 hectares

The project is expected to generate 612.93 GWh of electricity.

It provides drinking water supply to states like Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, and Rajasthan.

Associated Project: It is linked with the downstream Vyasi Hydroelectric Project (120 MW), forming part of the Yamuna river basin development.

UPSC Prelims Exam Practice Question

Ques: The Lakhwar Project has been in news mainly due to:

- (a) Inter-state water dispute
- (b) Revival after decades of delay
- (c) International funding by World Bank
- (d) Environmental clearance denial

Ans: b)

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

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.

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

GS Paper II: Indian Polity and Social Justice

UPSC Mains Exam Practice Question: Despite increasing voter participation, women's representation in legislatures remains low in India. Examine the reasons for this paradox. (150 Words)

Daily News Analysis

Context : The commentary by Shamika Ravi (Member, EAC-PM) highlights a profound paradox in Indian democracy: while women’s electoral participation (voter turnout) is at an all-time high, their legislative representation (seats held) remains stagnated at approximately 14-15% in Parliament and a dismal 9% in State Assemblies.

The Participation-Representation Gap

India is witnessing a "silent revolution" where women have moved from passive observers to active participants. In many states, female voter turnout now exceeds male turnout. However, this has not translated into political power.

The Gatekeeper Problem: Political parties act as barriers, consistently nominating fewer women due to perceived "winnability" issues and entrenched patriarchal networks.

Resource Disparity: Electoral politics in India is capital-intensive. Women often lack the same access to financial networks, land ownership, and social capital as their male counterparts.

Structural Faults vs. Meritocracy

A common critique of reservation is that it undermines "merit." Ravi counters this by arguing that the current system is **not meritocratic** to begin with; it is a system based on privilege and existing power structures.

The Local Government Precedent: Evidence from the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments (Panchayati Raj) shows that reservation works.

Policy Shift: Research indicates that women leaders at the local level prioritize "human development" sectors—water, sanitation, and health—more than men, leading to better long-term economic outcomes.

Key Arguments for Immediate Implementation

Category	Rationale
Democratic Legitimacy	A system where 50% of the population has only 15% voice lacks full representative legitimacy.
Catalytic Intervention	Reservation is not a permanent crutch but a "pipeline builder" that normalizes female leadership for future generations.
Developmental Efficiency	Gender-inclusive governance is linked to higher social indicators and more equitable policy-making.
Institutional Lag	Women's social and educational aspirations are moving faster than the political institutions meant to serve them.

Conclusion: A Necessary Progression

The article posits that voluntary quotas by parties have failed. Therefore, a **legislative mandate** is the only way to break the "cycle of exclusion." Implementing the Women’s Reservation Bill is not just an act of fairness; it is a strategic necessity to ensure India’s democracy remains resilient and responsive to its most dynamic demographic.

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