



**DR. RAJKUMAR ACADEMY
BENGALURU**

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WEEKLY NEWS COMPILATION

A CRISP AND COMPREHENSIVE CURRENT AFFAIRS CAPSULE

APRIL WEEK 3

13-04-2026 TO 18-04-2026

**YANA CAVES
DECLARED
GEO-HERITAGE
SITE OF
NATIONAL
IMPORTANCE**

**E-SWATHU 2.0
UPGRADED**

**AMAZON SIGNS
\$11.57 BN DEAL**

**BIHAR'S FIRST BJP
CM**

**PM INAUGURATES
SIX-LANE DELHI-
DEHRADUN
EXPRESSWAY**

❖ China giving fictitious names to Indian territory, says Centre

Context: India reiterated its rejection of China's attempts at assigning "fictitious names to places which form part of the territory of India". The External Affairs Ministry, in a statement, said such attempts were "mischievous", adding such actions "detract" ongoing normalisation process in the bilateral relationship.

- "Such attempts by China at introducing false claims and manufacturing baseless narratives cannot alter the undeniable reality that these places and territories, including Arunachal Pradesh, were, are, and will always remain an integral and inalienable part of India," Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said.
- "These actions by the Chinese side detract from ongoing efforts to stabilise and normalise bilateral ties. China should refrain from actions which inject negativity into relations and undermine efforts to create better understanding," said Mr. Jaiswal.
- India last year had protested after China created He'an and Hekang counties in Hotan (Khotan) Prefecture, saying that parts of these territories fell within the Union Territory of Ladakh.
- He'an included parts of the Aksai Chin plateau, which has been in focus because of the long-running India-China border issue. Continuing with this process, China has created a new county in the restive Xinjiang province, named Cenling. Cenling was announced on March 26 by the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region government and as of now details of its administrative divisions and precise boundaries are not known.
- Cenling is located near the Karakoram mountain range, which falls in the vicinity of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) and Afghanistan's Wakhan corridor.
- The apparent aim behind creating the Cenling county so close to PoK is to ensure security of Xinjiang, which is dealing with Uyghur insurgency and terrorist groups such as the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM). This region is also the starting point of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, a project that India has criticised as it violates India's sovereignty rights over PoK.

❖ Are biomass stoves a cleaner, cheaper alternative to LPG?**Can modern cookstoves turn the return of firewood into a sustainable alternative during the LPG crisis?**

- Owing to the LPG crisis, many areas—especially rural regions—have reported going back to firewood that are generally seen as increasing drudgery for women, while also causing pollution and health hazards.

Are today's firewood-based stoves less polluting and benign to human use?

- Modern biomass stoves, often called improved cookstoves (ICS), represent a major step up from traditional cooking methods. Unlike old-fashioned mud stoves, they can cut fuel use by up to two-thirds while dramatically reducing smoke.

- Traditional “chulhas” waste most of their heat through poor airflow and have an efficiency of barely 10%. By contrast, modern stoves reach thermal efficiency levels of 38% to 45%. Technologies such as secondary aeration help to catch soot and harmful gases before they turn into smoke.

How can mass firewood-based cooking be made sustainable?

- Cooking with firewood can be sustainable, provided the wood is harvested and used responsibly. Firewood is a renewable resource as long as the rate of extraction does not exceed the rate of regrowth. Since improved cookstoves burn fuel more efficiently, they can reduce the amount of wood needed for a meal.
- Modern cookstoves can also run on alternative biomass fuels, including pellets and briquettes made from sawdust or agricultural waste. This widens the fuel base and takes some pressure off raw firewood.
- Financing is key to achieving deployment at scale. Emissions savings enabled by improved cookstoves can be tracked and turned into carbon credits, creating a funding stream that makes stoves more affordable for lower-income families.

What about the cost of equipment and fuel expenses?

- Upfront costs vary significantly. Household models start below ₹2,000, while commercial systems can exceed ₹20,000, depending on the manufacturer and purchase channel (whether direct, through e-commerce, or via distributors). For low- and middle-income households, managing upfront costs can be made easier through financing partnerships involving microfinance, CSR programs, and carbon finance.
- The principal operating cost is fuel, and modern cookstoves’ high thermal efficiency can significantly reduce fuel requirements. Today’s stoves have cut firewood consumption by more than 50%.
- Firewood is highly cost-effective compared with LPG, especially during the ongoing supply crunch when commercial LPG rates in major cities have exceeded ₹100/kg. From the wide range of prices available for different firewood types, it is possible to assume a rough average cost of around ₹10/kg (if firewood is being bought instead of being simply scavenged). Considering that 4 kilos of firewood deliver the same cooking energy output as 1 kg of commercial LPG (in an improved cookstove), firewood could potentially offer cost savings of well over 60%.

What supply chain would be needed for mass adoption? Will this be a massive investment?

- Adopting biomass cookstoves on a large scale absolutely does not require a massive investment in fuel supply chains. Since the primary fuels – like firewood, crop waste, and dung cakes – are already widely available in rural and semi-urban areas, there is less need for expensive, centralised infrastructure.
- Scaling up is therefore more about strengthening distribution networks. Success depends on improving logistics, last-mile delivery, and local partnerships. Just as importantly, building user awareness and providing reliable after-sales support are essential to making sure these stoves remain a permanent part of daily life.

❖ Retail inflation inches up to 3.4% in March

Context: Retail inflation inched up to 3.4% in March from 3.21% February, mainly due to an uptick in prices of certain food items, show data released. The food inflation, based on the consumer price index (CPI), was estimated at 3.87% as against 3.47% in February. This remains below the Reserve Bank of India's median target of 4%.

- The data released by the National Statistics Office is based on a new series with a base year 2024.
- High inflation was noticed during March in gold and silver jewellery, coconut (copra), tomato, and cauliflower. On the other hand, inflation was in negative in onion, potato, garlic, arhar dal, and chickpeas, according to the NSO data.
- The CPI was at 1.65% in 'electricity, gas and other fuels' segment during March as against 1.52% in the preceding month. Inflation rates for rural and urban segments are 3.63% and 3.11%, respectively. Housing inflation rate for March 2026 was 2.11%.
- Highest inflation was in Telangana at 5.83% and the lowest in Mizoram at 0.66%.
- The RBI has also supported economic activity by maintaining a stable repo rate, he added.
- ICRA Chief Economist Aditi Nayar said the CPI inflation rose slightly to 3.4% in March over February, indicating a mild initial impact of the West Asian crisis on the headline number. "The sequential uptick in year-on-year inflation was driven by food and electricity, gas and other fuels groups, with the latter reflecting the impact of the West Asia crisis across LPG and alternate fuels," she said.

❖ IMD's April forecast projects monsoon to be 'below normal' for first time in 11 years

Context: India is staring at a "below-normal" southwest monsoon, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) has warned for the first time in 11 years in its April forecast.

- Between the monsoon months of June-September, India is likely to receive only 92% of the long period average (LPA) of 87 cm rainfall this year, M. Ravichandran, Secretary, Ministry of Earth Sciences, said at a press briefing on Monday.
- India last experienced reduced monsoon rainfall in 2023, when the IMD had warned of "near-normal" rainfall at 96% of the LPA. In 2015, the IMD's warning of "below-normal" rain — at 93% of the LPA — turned out to be an underestimate with the actual rainfall recorded at 86%, making it one of India's worst drought years.
- M. Mohapatra, Director-General, IMD, said the main reason for this year's below-normal monsoon warning was the likely development of an El Nino — the periodic warming of the Central Equatorial Pacific. At present, "weak" La Nina-like conditions — the converse of an El Nino — were transitioning to neutral conditions. The effects of the El Nino were only likely to come into full effect in the second half of the monsoon.
- With disruptions of fertilizer supply ahead of the kharif season anticipated in the wake of the West Asia war, insufficient rain could impact farming in the country, which is significantly rainfed.

- El Nino, which has emerged in 16 years since 1960, has depressed India's monsoon rainfall nine times.
- Mr. Mohapatra said that despite the links between an El Nino and weak monsoon, two factors could blunt its impact. The first is the so called 'positive' IOD (Indian Ocean Dipole), a condition that is likely to develop towards the end of the southwest monsoon season. The second is that the extent of northern hemisphere snow cover from January to March 2026 has been slightly below normal.

• The dipole refers to oscillations of sea-surface temperatures between the western (near Africa) and eastern (near Indonesia) tropical Indian Ocean. A "positive" dipole and reduced snow cover generally tend to bring more rain to India and can offset El Nino's "negative" impact, Mr Mohapatra said.

- 2024 and 2025 have been years of surplus monsoon. Save for 2023, India has received "normal" or excess rainfall in all years since 2020.
- The IMD is expected to update its monsoon forecast in May. The IMD's past history shows that its forecasts of a weak monsoon in April generally hold true though there have been several instances of the IMD predicting a "normal" monsoon and India staring at a drought.

• In 2002, the IMD predicted a normal monsoon but India experienced one of its worst droughts (81% of LPA). In 2009, the IMD's April forecast predicted a near-normal monsoon (96–98% of LPA) but actual rainfall was around 77% of the LPA, resulting in one of the worst droughts in over a century. In 2018, IMD's April forecast predicted 97% of normal levels, and even the May update held the figure at 97%, but actual rainfall turned out to be 91% — well below normal. The IMD's official parlance doesn't use the term "drought" and refers to rain less than 90% of the LPA as "deficient".

❖ Rare comet will be visible in pre-dawn skies till April 20

Context: A comet named C/2025 R3 (Pan-STARRS) will be visible for observers in Bengaluru and across southern India in the early morning hours till April 20.

- Deepak Choudhary, an avid astronomy enthusiast, who had recently captured the images of the Comet C/2025 R3 (PanSTARRS) said that it is a newly discovered comet identified by the Pan-STARRS survey.
- He said that it is currently visible in the early morning sky and appears low on the horizon just before sunrise.
- "While not visible to the naked eye under most conditions, it can be observed through small telescopes or smart imaging devices like the Seestar S50. The comet is expected to remain observable for a limited window over the coming weeks, gradually fading as it moves away from the Sun," he said.
- He added that as the comet approaches its closest point to the Sun, known as perihelion during April 19 and 20, it is expected to reach peak brightness. "Astronomers estimate it could shine between magnitude three and five, making it potentially visible to the naked eye under dark skies, though binoculars significantly enhance the view.

- For observers in Bengaluru and across southern India, the comet has been visible in the early morning hours between April 10 and April 20, appearing low above the eastern horizon shortly before sunrise. The optimal viewing window has been between 5 a.m. and 5.45 a.m., requiring a clear, unobstructed horizon and favorable weather conditions,” he added.
- Mr. Choudhary said that he captured the images of the comet near Malavalli on April 12.

• The comet was discovered on September 8, 2025, by the Pan-STARRS survey telescope in Hawaii. It is believed to originate from the distant Oort Cloud, a vast, spherical reservoir of icy bodies at the outermost reaches of the solar system.

❖ e-Swathu 2.0 upgraded to resolve key issues: Priyank

Context: Minister for Rural Development and Panchayat Raj and IT and Biotechnology Priyank Kharge on Monday announced a series of improvements to the e-Swathu 2.0 platform aimed at resolving key technical issues and enhancing user experience based on feedback from stakeholders.

- Reviewing the progress of the platform with officials concerned in Bengaluru, the Minister said that 1,52,863 applications have been received across the State so far, of which 1,33,803 applications have been successfully processed. He noted that 76,093 applications have been received under the newly introduced Form 11B, which are currently at various stages of approval.
- “We have carefully reviewed feedback from citizens and local bodies and taken concrete steps to resolve key technical challenges in e-Swathu 2.0. Our focus is to make the platform more seamless, transparent and citizen-friendly, while ensuring faster disposal of applications,” Mr. Kharge said.
- The Minister said the government will soon enable modifications to newly approved properties and integrate guideline values from the Stamps and Registration Department into the platform. He also stated that any remaining minor technical glitches will be addressed on priority.

❖ SC seeks Centre’s response to plea on proper MSP for crops

Context: The Supreme Court examined a petition saying the government should pay farmers at least the weighted average cost of production of various crops through the declaration of a proper minimum support price (MSP), and procurement at that rate.

- “Indian farmers are facing a terrible financial crisis as they are unable to sell their produce even at their actual cost of production. This has led to large-scale suicides of farmers; 17,000 have taken their own lives in Maharashtra alone in the last five years,” the petition said.
- The court issued notice to the Centre on the petition which argued that the government and its institutions calculate the cost of production of different agricultural produce on a State by State basis.

Context: Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal on Monday said the U.K. FTA with India would likely be operationalised and would come into effect on May 1, after the four nations — Switzerland, Norway, Liechtenstein, and Iceland— had already come into effect in October.

- Asked about the outlook for FY27, he said India would grow because so many more FTAs were coming into play.
- “Just talked to the Oman ministers. I am telling you, the Oman FTA will be effective from June 1. The U.K. minister and I talked about a week ago, and I met him in Cameroon also at the WTO.
- The New Zealand minister is coming in on April 24, and I get free from here on April 21. He met me in Cameroon. He says I am coming to sign and ink the deal. Once that is done, he can go to Parliament, and by October, November he says we will clear it. So maybe by January, New Zealand will come into play,” he told journalists.

India-U.S. trade deal

- On the state of play of trade talks with the U.S., he said India had finalised the trade deal, but a trade deal should give preferential access and market access compared with competitors.
- “So if my rate is X, it has to be lower than my competitors, so I get a chance to increase my business. That’s the essence of any trade deal that we do. We finalised the trade deal, and then the Supreme Court (of the U.S) order took away that competitive edge. So we have to work with the U.S. to see how that competitive edge can come back to us, and the trade deal is on,” he said.
- Mr. Goyal said, in fact, the U.K. and EU, in their history, would not have cleared any FTA as fast as they did with India.
- “Early next year, maybe January, February next year, if not earlier, the EU will be operational. So gentlemen, 38 developed countries, covering two-thirds of global trade and global GDP. Now India will have preferential access (to),” he said.

'Major job creation'

- He said in Tirupur alone there would be a huge amount of jobs, ₹45,000 crore worth of production, and Tirupur industrialists were telling him that they would double their business in the next three or four years.
- About Chinese investment, he said if there were sectors — desirable sectors like electronic components and stuff like that — India was willing to allow Chinese investment with technology transfer to come into India.
- “The automatic approval, what we have done — beneficial up to 10%, you will appreciate — is to cover large funds and all who may have a small Chinese element. So that we have allowed up to 10% beneficial, but we are cautious in our approach. But we are also conscious that India needs investment, India needs capital for growth. That’s what we are encouraging,” he added.

❖ World Bank chief cautions on jobs crisis even after war ends

- The West Asia war will dominate global finance officials' talks this week in Washington, but World Bank President Ajay Banga is sounding the alarm about a bigger, looming crisis: a huge gap in jobs for the 1.2 billion people who will reach working age in developing countries in the next 10 to 15 years.
- At current trajectories, those economies will generate only about 400 million jobs, leaving a deficit of 800 million jobs, Mr. Banga told Reuters.
- He admitted that focusing people on the long-term is daunting, given a series of short-term shocks that have buffeted the global economy since the COVID-19 pandemic, the most recent being the war in West Asia.

❖ Rajasthan's 60 GW projects awaiting transmission links

- India's top solar energy-generating state of Rajasthan has clean energy projects of capacity amounting to about 60 gigawatt (GW) awaiting transmission links as planners struggle to keep pace with a rapid build-out, a regulatory filing showed.
- The problem underscores a critical challenge for India in its effort to nearly double its non-fossil based power generation to 500 GW by 2030 as the systems carry electricity to other states from renewable-rich regions such as Rajasthan.
- The western desert state has 179 GW of renewable energy potential, the April 10 filing showed.reuters

❖ LIC board approves 1:1 bonus share issue

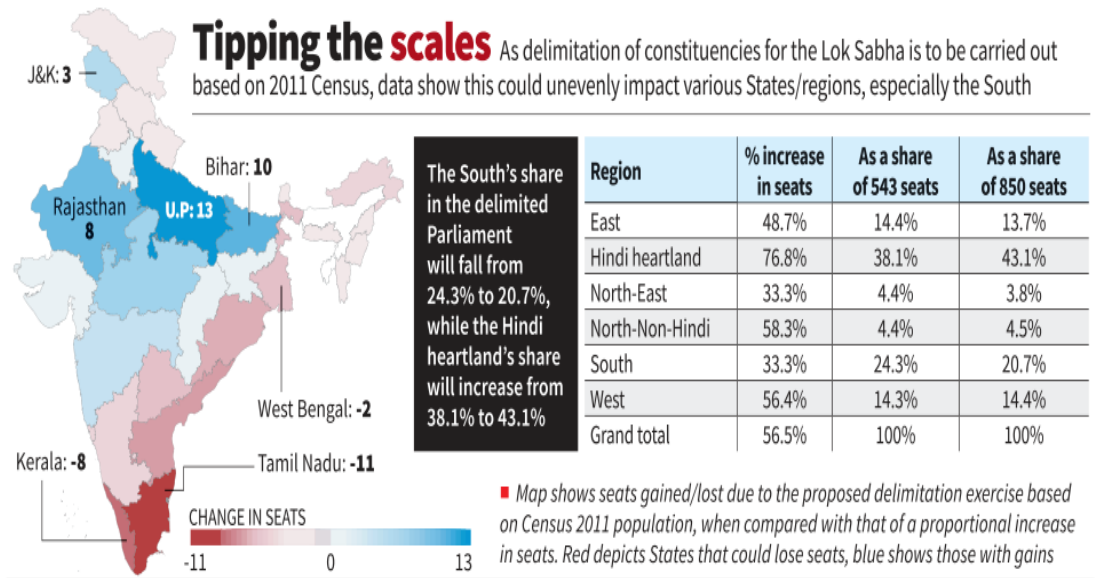
Context: The board of State-owned Life Insurance Corporation of India (LIC) approved issuance of bonus equity shares in the ratio of 1:1 to existing shareholders.

- The record date will be announced later. One fully paid up equity share of ₹10 each will be issued for every one fully paid-up equity share (of ₹10 each) by capitalising almost ₹6,325 crore reserves and surplus as on December 31, 2025.
- "Since listing in May 2022, LIC has been paying dividends consistently and also increasing dividend per share over a period of time from ₹1.50-12 per share," said chief executive officer and managing director R. Doraiswamy.
- "We have been continuously evaluating various mechanisms for rewarding our shareholders and we believe this proposed bonus issue is a significant step taken by us in that direction," he added.

❖ Centre moots inter-State redistribution of Lok Sabha seats based on 2011 Census

Context: Govt. circulates drafts of Constitution Amendment Bill and Delimitation Bill: If proposals are accepted, share of Lok Sabha seats of southern States will shrink.

- The Bills propose to raise strength of Lok Sabha to a maximum of 850 seats.
- States that have stabilised their populations could see their share of



representation in Parliament shrinking if proposals in the drafts of a Constitution Amendment Bill and a Delimitation Bill circulated by the Centre become law.

- The Budget Session is reconvening on Thursday to consider the Constitution (131st) Amendment Bill and the Delimitation Bill, which the government says are aimed at expediting the implementation of 33% reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and the State Assemblies.
- The Congress said the government was using women's reservation as a facade to railroad inter-State redistribution of Lok Sabha seats without consultation, and ahead of the 2029 general election. "We will oppose this backdoor delimitation. We are 100% for women's reservation and demand its immediate implementation within the existing strength of the Lok Sabha and Assemblies," Congress MP Abhishek Manu Singhvi said. "In the proposals there is not a whisper of the repeated assurance by the government that the inter-State seat distribution percentages will remain intact."
- The proposals emphatically seek to change the seat distribution — indeed, that is stated in the objects and reasons of the Constitutional Amendment Bill itself.
- The statement notes that "while the freeze of seats on the basis of population figures of the 1971 Census served an important policy purpose, the country's demographic profile has since undergone substantial changes, as reflected in the population figures of the latest published census, including significant inter-State and intra-State population shifts." The draft Delimitation Bill mandates that "it shall be the duty of the Commission to readjust, on the basis of the latest census figures, the allocation of seats in the House of the People to the States."
- If these proposals are enacted, the Hindi heartland States will see their share of Lok Sabha seats rise from 38.1% to 43.1%, while the southern States will see theirs shrink from 24.3% to 20.7%.

- In combination, the Bills propose an inter-State redistribution of Lok Sabha seats based on the latest Census figures and an increase in the size of the Lok Sabha to a maximum of 850 seats — 815 for States and 35 for Union Territories — against the current ceiling of 550, while carving out 33% for women.
- Under the existing constitutional scheme, Lok Sabha seats are distributed between States on the basis of the 1971 Census and within each State on the basis of the 2001 Census. Article 82 provides that this arrangement will continue “until the relevant figures for the first census taken after the year 2026 have been published”.
- The proposed amendment removes this provision altogether. “The Bills being introduced in the name of implementing women’s reservation amount to a death warrant for federal India,” said John Brittas, CPI(M) MP.
- The freeze on the readjustment of Lok Sabha seats written into Articles 81 and 82 was based on a political consensus negotiated by BJP Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee in 2001 and enacted through a constitutional amendment. The Narendra Modi government is now proposing to remove that safeguard and effect an immediate redistribution of Lok Sabha seats based on the latest Census — which, as of now, is that of 2011.
- The States of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Telangana, and Punjab had demanded an extension of the existing freeze for another 25 years beyond 2026. Not only has that demand been overlooked, the Centre is seeking parliamentary approval for an immediate redrawing of India’s representative map.

Nothing to do with women’s quota

- “Barely 36 hours before Parliament reconvenes, without any multi-party meetings despite repeated demands, and with no attempt to refer these Bills to a parliamentary committee, the government is trying to unilaterally enforce its wishes on the country. This has nothing to do with women’s reservation and everything to do with delimitation for BJP’s 2029 election plans,” Mr. Singhvi said.
- While all large States will receive some additional seats in the Lok Sabha, assuming all 815 permitted seats are allocated, some will see their strength rise dramatically. Uttar Pradesh will gain 58 seats over its current 80, while Kerala will gain only three, taking it from 20 to 23, if 815 seats are distributed according to the 2011 population distribution.
- U.P.’s share of the Lok Sabha will rise from 14.73% to 16.24%, while Kerala’s will shrink from 3.68% to 2.7%. Bihar will move from 40 seats (7.37%) to 72 seats (8.47%); Maharashtra from 48 to 78; and Tamil Nadu from 39 to 50 — a reduction in its current share from 7.18% to 5.88%.

❖ Nitish resigns; Samrat to become Bihar Chief Minister

Context: Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary is set to become the State’s first BJP Chief Minister after he was elected as the leader of the Bharatiya Janata Party and NDA legislative parties.

- He met Governor Syed Ata Hasnain to stake his claim to form the new government in the State and is likely to take oath at the Raj Bhavan on Wednesday along with a few select leaders, including two Deputy Chief Ministers from the Janata Dal (United).

- Mr. Choudhary's election followed days of suspense and speculation, and came an hour after Nitish Kumar officially resigned as Bihar's longest serving Chief Minister.
- Mr. Kumar, the leader of the JD (U), became a Rajya Sabha MP last week. In a post on X, he listed his government's achievements.
- Starting his day by offering floral tributes to Baba Saheb Bhim Rao Ambedkar on his birth anniversary in Patna, he reached Raj Bhawan along with senior NDA leaders at 3 p.m. and submitted his resignation to the Governor.

❖ **Constitution Amendment Bill moots possible change in size of State Assemblies**

Context: The Constitution (One Hundred and Thirty-First Amendment) Bill, 2026 proposes significant changes to the size and composition of the Assemblies by restarting the process of delimitation and removing the long-standing constitutional freeze, in effect since 1976, on readjustment of seats based on population.

- The Bill will be introduced in the Special Session of Parliament commencing on Thursday.
- The proposed amendments, in effect, mean that Assemblies will see a change in their total number of seats depending on population changes, and constituency boundaries within States will also be redrawn as part of the delimitation exercise, the Constitution (Amendment) Bill said.
- The Bill seeks to amend the provisions in Article 170, which governs the composition of the Assemblies, to enable a fresh readjustment of the number of Assembly seats and the redrawing of territorial constituencies on the basis of a future Census to be specified by Parliament.
- In doing so, it removes the existing freeze that has prevented such readjustments since 1976. The Bill proposes to delete the third proviso of Article 170 that had postponed the delimitation exercise until after the first Census which will be conducted in 2026.
- The amendment also replaces the earlier formulation that allowed Parliament to determine the authority for delimitation with a provision explicitly assigning the task to a Delimitation Commission.
- It further revises the explanation to Article 170(2) so that "population" for the purpose of seat allocation will mean the population ascertained in the Census that Parliament decides to adopt.
- The Bill substitutes Article 334A to operationalise the one-third reservation for women in the Assemblies. The provision states that the reservation will come into effect only after a fresh delimitation exercise is carried out on the basis of the latest published Census. As of now, the latest published Census is 2011.

Tribal representation

- The Bill provides for safeguards to ensure the delimitation exercise does not dilute tribal representation in certain Northeastern States.
- The delimitation process itself will be governed by the proposed Delimitation Bill, 2026, which provides for the constitution of a Delimitation Commission by the Centre.
- The commission will be chaired by a former or sitting Supreme Court judge and will include the Chief Election Commissioner, or an Election Commissioner nominated by the Election Commission, and the State Election Commissioner of the concerned State.

❖ Modi, Trump discuss need to keep Strait of Hormuz secure

Context: Against the backdrop of continued tension in the Gulf region, Prime Minister Narendra Modi held a conversation with U.S. President Donald Trump and discussed the need for keeping the Strait of Hormuz “open and secure”.

- The telephone call from Mr. Trump came three days after the U.S. and Iran held a round of discussion in Islamabad to resolve the crisis that started with the U.S. bombing Iranian targets in Tehran on February 28.
- “Received a call from my friend President Donald Trump. We reviewed the substantial progress achieved in our bilateral cooperation in various sectors.
- We are committed to further strengthening our Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership in all areas. We also discussed the situation in West Asia and stressed the importance of keeping the Strait of Hormuz open and secure,” said Prime Minister Modi in a post on X.

❖ PM inaugurates six-lane Delhi-Dehradun expressway

Context: Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated a six-lane Delhi-Dehradun expressway, a ₹12,000-crore project that is set to reduce travel time between the two cities from five-six hours to about 2-2.5 hours.

- The 213-km access-controlled corridor now open for use is expected to significantly improve regional connectivity, linking key towns in Uttar Pradesh, before reaching Dehradun. It will also integrate with major national corridors, including the Delhi-Mumbai, Delhi-Katra, and Delhi-Meerut expressways.

❖ IMF cuts growth outlook, warns of recession

Context: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) cut its growth outlook on Tuesday due to Iran war-driven energy price spikes and supply disruptions and warned that the global economy would teeter on the brink of recession if the conflict worsens and oil stays above \$100 per barrel through 2027.

- With uncertainty over the Middle East conflict gripping finance, officials gathering for IMF and World Bank spring meetings in Washington, IMF presented three growth scenarios: weaker, worse and severe, depending on how the war unfolds.
- The World Economic Outlook’s most optimistic “reference scenario” assumes a short-lived Iran war and forecasts 3.1% real GDP growth for 2026, down 0.2 percentage point from its previous forecast in January.
- And the IMF’s worst-case “severe scenario” assumes an extended and deepening conflict and much higher oil prices that prompt major financial market dislocations and tighter financial conditions, slashing global growth to 2.0%.
- “This would mean a close call for a global recession,” the IMF said, adding growth has been below that level only four times since 1980 — with the last two severe recessions in 2009.

❖ Nvidia enters cloud gaming space in India; sets April 16 for introduction

Context: Nvidia is introducing GeForce Now cloud gaming subscription service in India on April 16, years after the GPU maker first announced the service's rollout in the country.

- Cloud gaming allows players to stream PC games to local devices, allowing them to access large, resource-heavy games on devices that may not have the storage or hardware capable of playing those games.
- GeForce Now comes as another heavyweight enters the Indian market — Xbox Cloud Gaming by Microsoft — betting on Indian users' appetite for high-end gaming. Nvidia will use RTX 5080 GPUs to run games for users, with a maximum bitrate of 100 megabits per second, and server infrastructure based in Mumbai. JioCloudGaming is the other major player in the market.
- Nvidia's entry comes as GPU and memory prices skyrocket, leading to price hikes for PC builders across the board.
- GeForce Now has a small library of games that users can play for free, with a broader catalogue playable if users have purchased those select games on storefronts like Steam, Epic Games and Xbox's PC games store.

Internet test

- Unlike multiplayer games, where servers exchange a minimal amount of data between players — and let the consumers' devices do the heavy lifting of rendering the graphics of other players' actions — cloud gaming requires enormous, stable bandwidth to render every frame of playback remotely.
- Since an entire high-quality stream is being played to users in real time, the best possible cloud gaming experience needs a wired ethernet connection with high speed home broadband.

❖ West Asia war threatens to push 2.5 mn into poverty: UNDP

Context: The conflict and military escalation in West Asia threatens to push 2.5 million people in India into poverty and the country is projected to experience some loss in its human development progress, according to estimates and projections by the United Nations.

- The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in a report titled 'Military Escalation In The Middle East: Human Development Impacts Across Asia And The Pacific' noted that the conflict is "widening human development pressures across Asia and the Pacific. Through higher fuel, freight, and input costs, the shock is diminishing household purchasing power, raising food insecurity, straining public budgets, and weakening livelihoods".
- The preliminary assessment, issued on Tuesday, estimates that globally 8.8 million people are at risk of falling into poverty and the West Asia military escalation could cost Asia-Pacific up to \$299 billion.

- In India, poverty is expected to rise from around 4,00,000 to 2.5 million, the report said. It added that the number of people pushed into poverty in the world as a result of the conflict rises from approximately 1.9 million to nearly 8.8 million across scenarios, with South Asia accounting for the largest share, ranging from about 1.7 million to over 8 million, reflecting both the subregion's population size and its higher exposure to income and price shocks. China is estimated to experience a more moderate increase in the number of people at risk of falling into poverty, from around 1,15,000 to over 6,20,000, reflecting small proportional changes applied to a very large population base.

- Highlighting the estimated poverty impact of the military escalation, the report said that India's poverty rate is estimated to rise to 24.2% post-crisis from 23.9%, pushing 24,64,698 people into poverty.
- An estimated 35,40,33,698 people are projected to live in poverty in the country post-crisis as compared to 35,15,69,000 pre-crisis.
- The UNDP simulation estimates the impact of the conflict on the Human Development Index (HDI) for countries across the region. It indicates that Iran's HDI could decline by an amount equivalent to roughly one to one and a half years of human development progress.
- "India is projected to experience a loss of approximately 0.03-0.12 years of HDI progress," it said.
- The report notes that among the region's larger importers, India meets over 90% of its oil needs through imports, sourcing more than 40% of crude imports and 90% of LPG imports from West Asia.

KPSC PRELIMS CUM MAINS

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❖ States' seats will rise 50% after delimitation: Centre

Context: No State will lose current proportional strength in Parliament, says govt. functionary; while not mentioned in the draft Bills, Home Minister has assured party representatives of rise, official adds.

- All States will have their number of Lok Sabha seats increase by half after delimitation, and no State will lose its current proportional strength in Parliament, a senior government functionary told The Hindu on Wednesday.
- He said Union Home Minister Amit Shah would clarify this in Parliament during the debate on the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill and the Delimitation Bill. The debate begins.
- “If there is any requirement for change in the language of the draft Bill, that too will be addressed,” the government functionary said.
- Mr. Shah had assured party representatives that the strength of the Lok Sabha would increase by 50%, to be distributed across States in their existing proportions — that is, a 50% increase in the number of Lok Sabha seats from each individual State.
- However, this is not mentioned in the drafts of the Bills circulated by the government. In fact, the Bills propose an inter-State redistribution of Lok Sabha seats, which could make it impossible for current proportionate shares to be maintained.
- The senior functionary said this was a misreading of the drafts. “Those who are reading bits and pieces and interpreting them as reducing the relative strength of the South are missing the big picture,” the functionary said.
- Asked how this position squares with the proposed amendments to the Constitution and the provisions of the Delimitation Bill, the functionary said everything would be explained during the parliamentary debate. “There is no change in the assurance given by the government that all States will have their number of seats in the Lok Sabha increased by 50%. If Tamil Nadu has 39, it will have 58; Kerala has 20 and it will have 30,” the functionary said, asking to wait for the mechanics of it to be explained in Parliament.
- The drafts of the Bills have raised concerns that the States which have stabilised their population are set to lose their relative strength when the composition of the Lok Sabha is reapportioned between States as per the latest Census figures.

❖ Iran says ceasefire is at risk, threatens to close Red Sea traffic

Context: Iran's military threatened to shut down Red Sea trade unless the U.S. lifted its naval blockade on Tehran's ports, saying the ceasefire was at risk.

- The head of Iran's military central command centre said a U.S. failure to lift the blockade would constitute “a prelude” to violating the two-week ceasefire. Unless the U.S. relents, Iran's armed forces “will not allow any exports or imports to continue in the Persian Gulf, the Sea of Oman, and the Red Sea,” Iranian General Ali Abdollahi said.
- The warning came after U.S. President Donald Trump indicated peace negotiations could resume this week, while Iran confirmed the sides had kept talking via Pakistan after a first round of negotiations fell flat. Iran on Wednesday welcomed a Pakistani delegation led by its Army chief Asim Munir.

- Islamabad “has held discussions with the Americans and has also heard our stances. During this visit the views of both sides are to be discussed in detail,” Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmail Baghaei said.
- Washington has sought to turn the screws on Tehran with the blockade, with U.S. Central Command saying that American forces “have completely halted economic trade going into and out of Iran by sea”.
- Speaking to the New York Post on Tuesday, Mr. Trump said a new round of talks with Iran could take place in Pakistan “over the next two days”, while telling Fox Business the war was “very close to being over”. On the Iranian side, a Foreign Ministry spokesperson said “several messages” had been exchanged via Islamabad since the talks wrapped up on Sunday, while Tehran received a Pakistani delegation led by its Army Chief Field Marshal Asim Munir.

❖ HC directs government to ‘strictly and faithfully’ implement menstrual leave policy

Context: The High Court of Karnataka on Wednesday (April 15, 2026) directed the State Government to “strictly and faithfully” implement the menstrual leave (ML) policy, which mandates registered establishments to grant one day's leave per month to women employees, aged between 18 and 52 years, during their menstrual cycle till the proposed law on ML is enacted.

- In the interregnum, the Court said, it shall be incumbent upon the State to ensure effective operationalisation of the policy through the issuance of suitable guidelines, circulars, and administrative instructions to secure its uniform, consistent and rigorous implementation across all sectors, including the unorganised sectors.
- Justice M. Nagaprasanna passed the order on a petition filed by 41-year-old Chandravva Hanumant Gokavi, who works in a hotel in Mudalgi of Gokak taluk in Belagavi district before the Dharwad bench of the Court.

No undue delay

- Upon enactment of the proposed law — Karnataka Menstrual Leave and Hygiene Bill, 2025, the State shall, without any undue delay frame appropriate rules to give full and meaningful effect of the mandate, the Court said.
- “This court would also observe that the State ought not be deterred or constrained by misplaced apprehensions founded upon a superficial invocation of Article 14. Men and women stand equal in the eyes of the law, yet they are biologically distinct. To acknowledge such differences, particularly in matters concerning health, dignity, and bodily autonomy, is not to transgress the guarantee of equality but to give it substantive meaning,” the court observed.

Other petitions pending

- Interestingly, the petitions - filed by the Bangalore Hotels' Association, the Karnataka Employers' Association, the Bangalore Employers' Association and 15 women working professionals -- challenging the legality of the ML policy notification issued on November 20, 2025, are pending adjudication before another judge in the Principal bench of the Court in Bangalore along with several intervening applications filed by various trade unions and a group of women advocates supporting the policy and opposing these petitions.

Petitioner's plea

- Ms. Chandravva had sought a direction to the government to effectively implement the policy, including for the unorganised sector while complaining that she has not been given menstrual leave as per the policy.
- It was contended in the petition that the policy is not known to the employees in several areas, and therefore, the establishments that employ women should create awareness about the said policy.

For unorganised sector

- Citing the apex court's verdicts recognising the rights of those unorganised sector workers and the importance of social security benefits to female workers, Justice Nagaprasanna said that it is necessary for the State government now to tap the unorganised sectors to take the benefit of the Government order or the proposed Bill when it becomes an Act.
- Pointing out various categories, including daily wage labourers, in the unorganised sector and the November 2025 ML policy mainly aimed at the organised sector, the Court said that it becomes incumbent upon the State to undertake comprehensive measures aimed at sensitising all sectors, both organised and unorganised; and the unorganised sector requires a more facilitative mechanism.
- The November 2025 notification stated that ML is available for all permanent, contract and outsourced women employees in the establishments registered under the Factories Act, 1948, the Karnataka Shops and Commercial Establishments Act, 1961, the Plantation Labour Act, 1951, the Beedi and Cigar Workers (Conditions of Employment) Act, 1966, and the Motor Transport Workers Act, 1961.

❖ Ballot paper law notified

Context: Paving the way for the introduction of ballot papers in the local bodies election, The Karnataka Gram Swaraj and Panchayat Raj (Amendment) Act, 2026, was notified on Wednesday after it received Governor's assent.

- The government reverted to paper ballots for local body elections in response to concerns about EVM credibility and voter privacy reflecting growing consensus to strengthen electoral mechanisms that prioritise anonymity and transparency, the Act said.

Context: Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, who received Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Bengaluru, submitted an 18-point memorandum to him. The memorandum included requests for a special grant of ₹6,000 crore for the development of Bengaluru, early clearance for the Mekedatu balancing reservoir project, and the gazette notification of the Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal Award-II.

- “While Karnataka continues to be among the largest contributors to the national exchequer and a leader in economic and social development, certain long-pending issues require the Union government’s urgent attention,” the Chief Minister stated in the memorandum.

For Bengaluru

- Among the key demands, he said that in the light of Bengaluru’s contribution to the national economy, early release of ₹6,000 crore to strengthen infrastructure and sustain its global competitiveness was warranted. It sought the inclusion of the Bengaluru-Mysuru segment in the proposed high-speed rail corridor, and urged the Centre to expedite the release of committed Central assistance for the Bengaluru Suburban Rail Project, besides initiating the Bengaluru-Mumbai High-Speed Rail Corridor.
- The memorandumk sought the immediate release of the pending grants to the tune of ₹5,495 crore recommended by the 15th Finance Commission to address fiscal imbalances. The memorandum sought to bring to the Centre’s notice that despite fulfilling all conditions, Karnataka was yet to receive grants of ₹2,860 crore for FY 2025-26 for gram panchayats.
- The State urged the Centre to direct the Union Ministry of Jal Shakti and the Central Water Commission to expedite the approval of the Mekedatu project. It also sought the release of the already announced ₹5,300 crore Central assistance for the Upper Bhadra Project and the status of National Project.
- The memorandum urged the Centre to gazette the Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal-II Award and declare the Upper Krishna Project (Stage-III) as a National Project. It also sought Wildlife Clearance for Kalasa-Banduri Nala project (Mahadayi).
- The memorandum urged the Union government to ensure an equitable allocation of at least 40-45 tmc. ft. of water to the State under the Godavari-Cauvery and Bedthi-Varada link projects of the Inter-Linking of Rivers programme.
- The State government further urged the Centre to include the State’s decision of providing 56% reservation for SC/ST and OBCs. It also appealed to the Centre to include certain Other Backward Castes, which have been recommended by the State government, in the Central List of Scheduled Tribes.
- The State urged the Centre to provide dedicated financial support of ₹5,000 crore annually for the development of the Kalyana Karnataka region besides establishing at least one Public Sector Undertaking in each of the districts of North Karnataka.
- It also sought expedited Forest, Environmental and Wildlife clearances for the Sharavathi Pumped Storage Hydropower Project. With respect to Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM), Karnataka sought the release of the pending central share of ₹17,554 crore.

❖ Yana Caves declared Geo-heritage Site of National Importance

Context: The geo-heritage site, as per the Department of Tourism, serves three purposes — conservation, education and tourism.

- Known for its striking black crystalline rock formations and religious significance, the Yana Caves in Karnataka has been declared a 'Geo-heritage Site of National Importance' by the Ministry of Mines through the Geological Survey of India (GSI).
- Located in the Western Ghats in Uttara Kannada district, Yana Caves features massive karst limestone structures, including two prominent monolithic outcrops — Bhairaveshwara Shikhara (120 m) and Mohini Shikhara (90 m). The site is also a popular short-trek destination, the GSI, in a letter said.
- The region hosts 61 identified karst landforms, shaped over time by natural geological processes. According to the GSI, the formations date back around 2.7 million years and are composed of Precambrian dolomitic limestone. Over millions of years, intense tropical weathering and chemical dissolution have sculpted the terrain into a distinctive karst landscape.
- "The twin monoliths dominate the area and are not only significant geological features but are also closely tied to local mythology, drawing pilgrims and visitors alike," GSI said.
- A Geo-heritage Site of National Importance refers to a location with unique and irreplaceable geological features — such as formations, fossils or landscapes, recognised for their scientific, educational and aesthetic value. These sites serve as natural records of earth's evolution and are protected for research and geotourism.
- The tag granted by the GSI for the State would mean protection of a rare geological asset, promotion of research and learning, and tourism-driven development around the site. The geo-heritage site, as per the Department of Tourism, serves three purposes, namely, conservation, education and tourism. It brings the site under formal recognition, helping prevent damage from unregulated development.
- It also turns the site into a scientific and educational resource, functioning as a natural laboratory where researchers, students and the public can study earth's history, geological processes and past climate patterns.
- More than 90 sites across the country have so far been identified as National Geological Monuments, geo-heritage sites or potential geo-heritage locations. "The GSI on April 13 informed the Karnataka government that the declaration was made as part of its 176th Foundation Day celebrations," Tourism Minister H.K. Patil said.

❖ Devanuru Mahadeva chosen for Kannada and Culture Department's Pampa Award

Context: Noted writer Devanuru Mahadeva has been chosen for the prestigious Pampa Award 2025-26 of the Kannada and Culture Department.

- Religious personalities Siddarama Sharana of Beldale and Bhanu Keethi Bhattaraka Swami of Jain Mutt of Kambadahalli have been chosen for the Basava National Award and Bhagwan Mahaveer National Peace Award, respectively.

- According to a statement by Kannada and Culture Minister Shivaraj Tangadagi, the others chosen for different awards are: Allabhaksh Meerasaheb Mirji (K.G. Kundanagara Gadinada Sahitya Award); Sukanya Maruthi (Danachintamani Attimabbe award); G.V. Sharada (Dr. Gubbi Veeranna award); Prasanna (B.V. Karanth award); Gangarama Chandala (Dr. Siddalingaiah Literary award); V. Hari Ram (Varna Shilpi Venkatappa award); Ashok Gudigar (Jakanachari award); M. Mahadevaiah and B. Lakshmana (Janapadasri award); Siddanagouda Patil (Sangolli Rayanna Award); K. Neela (Akka Mahadevi award); S.G. Siddaramaiah (Kayakayogi Siddarameshwara award); Kallinatha Shastry (Kumaravyasa award), and Prathibha Prahlad (Natyarani Shantala award).

❖ **Entry of 'fertile women' antithetical to the identity of Sabarimala deity, says temple board in top court**

Context: The Supreme Court said everybody is entitled to their individual conscience and no religion is superior to the other, even as the Travancore Devaswom Board (TDB) argued that the entry of "fertile women" between 10 and 50 years of age would be antithetical to the very manifestation and identity of the "special deity" at the Sabarimala temple in Kerala.

- Appearing before a nine-judge Bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, senior advocate Abhishek Manu Singhvi, for the TDB (which manages the shrine), said there were about 1,000 temples dedicated to Lord Ayyappa in India. The shrine at Sabarimala was the only one with the deity in the form of a Naishtika Brahmachari (perennial celibate).
- Mr. Singhvi argued that the very foundation of the fame and prowess of the deity lay in the fact that Lord Ayyappa was in the Naishtika Brahmachari form. "The only reason people revere him is that he has eschewed all forms of grihastashram and embraced penance of a very high order. Worshipers observe vratham," Mr. Singhvi submitted.
- He denied that women were excluded in toto. He said a "sub-classification" of women, that is, those aged between 10 years and 50 years, could not take the Sabarimala pilgrimage.
- The day-long hearing saw Justice B.V. Nagarathna orally observe that Article 25(2)(a) of the Constitution required "religious practices" to be left untouched. "You can regulate anything but a religious practice," she remarked.
- She said **Article 25 (freedom of conscience and religion) invoked equality for all religions. "No religion is superior to the other. Persons are equally entitled to freedom of conscience. The truth is one. Scholars interpret it in different ways. That is why everybody is entitled to their individual conscience. Article 25(1) recognises that no path or conscience is superior to any other path or conscience... You may follow any path you wish,"** Justice Nagarathna said.

❖ How proposed delimitation would redraw political map

Context: On reallocation based on 2011 Census, southern and northeastern States stand to lose the most in seat share; Hindi-heartland States gain disproportionately.

- If the Lok Sabha's strength is expanded to 850 and seats are allocated on the basis of the 2011 Census population, as the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill and the companion Delimitation Bill to be tabled in Parliament envisage, the southern States and the North-East would see a sharp erosion in their share of parliamentary representation, while the Hindi-heartland States of northern India would be the overwhelming beneficiaries.
- The two Bills, to be introduced in Parliament from April 16, seek to do a) raise the Lok Sabha ceiling from 543 to 850 seats (815 from States, 35 from Union Territories), b) replace the constitutional freeze that pegged seat allocation to the 1971 Census with an open-ended formula allowing Parliament to choose the Census basis by ordinary law, and c) constitute a Delimitation Commission that would use the latest published Census, currently the 2011 Census, to redraw boundaries and reallocate seats. The stated purpose is to operationalise women's reservation under the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023.
- It is to be noted that Home Minister Amit Shah said in Coimbatore in February 2025 that southern States would not lose a single seat on a "pro rata basis". Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal told The Hindu on April 13, 2026 that concerns about southern States were a "silly concern", asserting there would be a "proportional increase across the country".
- However, the Bills contain no mechanism to guarantee existing seat proportions. Article 81(2)(a) mandates population-proportional allocation and not a uniform percentage increase. In other words, delimitation will be based on population proportion according to the latest available Census.

Revising representation

The data for the tables were sourced from Census of India, 2011; NFHS-5 (2019-21); Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026; Delimitation Bill, 2026

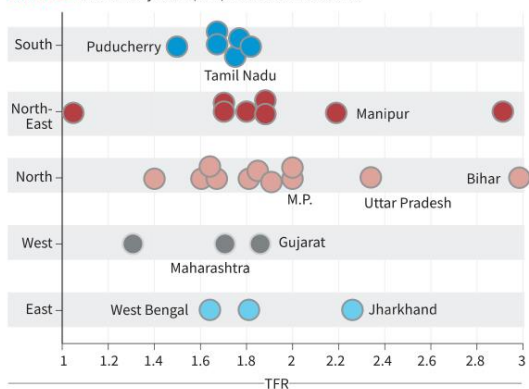


TABLE 2: Region-wise increase in seats, and region-wise share of seats in the current composition and as per the proposed delimitation exercise

Region	% increase in seats	As a share of 543 seats	As a share of 850 seats
East	48.7%	14.4%	13.7%
Hindi-heartland	76.8%	38.1%	43.1%
North-East	33.3%	4.4%	3.8%
North-non-Hindi	58.3%	4.4%	4.5%
South	33.3%	24.3%	20.7%
West	56.4%	14.4%	14.3%
Grand total	56.5%	100%	100%

The South's share in the post-delimitation Parliament will fall from 24.3% to 20.7%, while the Hindi heartland's share will rise from 38.1% to 43.1%

CHART 3: Total fertility rates (TFR) across various States



The data for chart-3 is based on NFHS-5 (2019-21). As shown in the chart, all five southern States have TFR between 1.5 and 1.8, below the replacement level of 2.1

Calculations by The Hindu Data Team

TABLE 1: The table shows seats gained/lost due to the proposed delimitation exercise based on Census 2011 population, when compared with that of a proportional increase in seats. In the table, red depicts States that could lose seats, blue shows those with gains

States/UTs	Change in seats
Uttar Pradesh	13
Maharashtra	3
Bihar	10
West Bengal	-2
Madhya Pradesh	5
Tamil Nadu	-11
Rajasthan	8
Karnataka	-2
Gujarat	2
Andhra Pradesh	-5
Odisha	-3
Telangana	-2
Kerala	-8
Jharkhand	1
Assam	0
Punjab	-1
Chhattisgarh	1
Haryana	2
Delhi	5
Jammu & Kashmir	3
Uttarakhand	-1
Himachal Pradesh	-1
Tripura	0
Meghalaya	-1
Manipur	-1
Nagaland	-1
Goa	-2
Arunachal Pradesh	-2
Puducherry	-1
Mizoram	-1
Chandigarh	-1
Sikkim	-1
Dadra & NH and Daman & Diu	-3
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	-1
Ladakh	-1
Lakshadweep	-1

Who gains and who loses

- Using 2011 Census population to allocate 850 seats proportionally and comparing against a uniform proportional increase (which preserves existing seat shares), the disparities become stark. The five States/UTs that gain the most seats compared to a proportional increase belong to the Hindi heartland. Four of the five States/UTs that lose the most belong to the South or the East. (Table 1)
- Aggregated by region, the pattern is unmistakable. The Hindi heartland's (Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Haryana, Chhattisgarh, Uttarakhand and Delhi) share in the 850-seat House would rise from 38.1% to 43.1%. The South's share would fall from 24.3% to 20.7%. The North-East would decline from 4.4% to 3.8%. The Eastern States would slip from 14.4% to 13.7%. (Table 2)
- The demographic roots of this asymmetry are visible in the latest fertility data. According to NFHS-5 (2019-21), all five southern States have total fertility rates between 1.5 and 1.8, well below the replacement level of 2.1 (Chart 3). Bihar (3.0), Meghalaya (2.9), Uttar Pradesh (2.4), Jharkhand (2.3), and Manipur (2.2) remain above replacement. The gap that drove the original 1976 freeze on seat allocation has narrowed over the decades, but it persists.
- States that invested in health, education, and family planning would see their share of parliamentary power shrink, while States that lagged on these indicators would gain the most. The data lays bare the core tension in the delimitation exercise: Article 81(2)(a) rewards demographic weight, not developmental achievement.

❖ Iran threatens to close Red Sea traffic

Context: Washington has sought to turn the screws on Tehran with the blockade, with U.S. Central Command saying that American forces “have completely halted economic trade going into and out of Iran by sea”.

- Speaking to the New York Post, Mr. Trump said a new round of talks with Iran could take place in Pakistan “over the next two days”, while telling Fox Business the war was “very close to being over”. On the Iranian side, a Foreign Ministry spokesperson said “several messages” had been exchanged via Islamabad since the talks wrapped up on Sunday, while Tehran received a Pakistani delegation led by its Army chief Field Marshal Asim Munir.

❖ Samrat Choudhary sworn in as Bihar's first BJP CM

Context: The newly elected leader of the ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA), Samrat Choudhary, was sworn in as the Chief Minister of Bihar on Wednesday, marking the end of Nitish Kumar's record tenure in the post.

- Two senior leaders from the JD(U), Bijendra Prasad Yadav and Vijay Kumar Choudhary, took oath as Ministers. Both have been designated as Deputy CMs in the new BJP-led NDA government in the State.
- Before being sworn in, Mr. Samrat Choudhary visited a famous Hanuman temple in the State capital, Patna, to offer prayers and seek blessings.

- Senior BJP leaders, including party chief Nitin Nabin, Union Minister J.P. Nadda, and national general secretary (organisation) B.L. Santosh, along with Mr. Kumar, were present.
- After taking oath, Mr. Samrat Choudhary went to the party headquarters to meet party workers and leaders. “With the blessings of Nitish Kumar and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, I will take forward the work of development and growth in the State,” he told presspersons.

Administrative issues

- In his first meeting as Chief Minister of Bihar, Mr. Choudhary directed State officials to implement a policy of “zero tolerance” against corruption with absolute firmness.
- He also told officials to ensure that the general public received proper facilities and that their issues are resolved promptly at the block, circle, and police station levels. He asserted that corruption would not be tolerated at any cost, from the highest levels of administration to the grassroots.
- “Whenever an issue concerning the public arises within any department, ensure that immediate action is taken to address it. There should be no bureaucratic complexities regarding the resolution of land-related disputes; instead, streamline procedures to ensure their speedy disposal,” Mr. Choudhary said.

❖ Bageshwar Dham gets govt. nod to receive foreign funds

Context: Dhirendra Krishna Shastri, leader of the religious body, advocates establishment of a ‘Hindu Rashtra’; FCRA registration mandatory for NGOs or associations to receive foreign donations.

- The Union Home Ministry has granted registration under the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA) to Baba Bageshwar Dham, a religious body led by Dhirendra Krishna Shastri, a Madhya Pradesh-based godman who seeks to establish ‘Hindu Rashtra’.
- Mr. Shastri, 29, is often courted by politicians and is known for his provocative statements on religious matters. His website has a separate section to collect donations from within India.
- Despite repeated attempts, the religious body could not be reached for comments.

Mandatory registration

- Registration under the FCRA is mandatory if a non-government organisation (NGO) or an association wants to receive foreign donations.
- NGOs can receive foreign contributions for social, educational, religious, economic, and cultural programmes and can be registered for at least one or multiple categories.
- The Shri Bageshwar Jan Seva Samiti Gadha at Chhatarpur in Madhya Pradesh has been registered under the ‘Religious (Hindu)’ programme, other than cultural, economic, educational and social categories.

- Till April 15, 38 NGOs have been granted FCRA registration, out of which six have stated 'Religious (Hindu)' as one of the programmes for which foreign funds are required. Other than Bageshwar Dham, those registered under the category are Ramakrishna Missions at Bolpur in West Bengal and Purnea in Bihar, Divya Jyoti Jagriti Sansthan in Delhi, The Institution at Dharmasthala in Karnataka, and Radha Soami Satsang at Agra, Uttar Pradesh.

Five-year validity

- A FCRA registration is valid for five years, after which the NGO has to apply for a renewal. Since 2015, the FCRA registrations of more than 18,000 NGOs have been cancelled. As on April 15, there are 14,538 FCRA-registered NGOs active in the country.
- During the Budget session of Parliament, which concluded on April 2, the Union government proposed to introduce the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026 to amend the 2010 Act. However, following an uproar by Opposition parties, its discussion and passage were deferred.
- The Chief Ministers of poll-bound Tamil Nadu and Kerala, and Christian groups opposed the Bill as it empowers the Ministry to take over the property and assets of an NGO if its FCRA registration is cancelled or suspended.

❖ Unemployment rate shows a slight increase in March

- The unemployment rate (UR) for persons aged 15 and above stood at 5.1% in March, up by 0.2 percentile points from February, largely due to urban joblessness, according to the Periodic Labour Force Survey prepared by the National Statistics Office.
- The report said UR in rural areas was 4.3%, while in urban areas it was 6.8%. Among women aged 15 and above, the UR was 4.1% in rural areas and 9% in urban areas.
- The female Labour Force Participation Rate declined to 34.4% in March from 35.3% in February. The Worker Population Ratio for persons aged 15 and above was 52.6% in March.

❖ Amazon signs \$11.57 bn deal for satellite firm Globalstar

- Amazon.com said it would acquire Globalstar in an \$11.57 billion deal, bolstering its fledgling satellite business as it tries to catch up with Elon Musk's Starlink.
- Tech companies are pouring in billions of dollars to capture the lucrative market for satellite-based connectivity, but it will be a tall order to match Starlink's 10,000-unit-strong network.
- Through the deal, Amazon adds Globalstar's two dozen satellites to its existing network of more than 200. Amazon has been working to ramp up its network by deploying about 3,200 satellites in Earth's low orbit by 2029, with roughly half required to be in place by a July regulatory deadline.
- It is also preparing to roll out its satellite internet services later this year. Globalstar's satellite network is designed for reliable, low-data connections directly to mobile devices, or Direct-to-Device (D2D). Reuters

❖ **WPI inflation rises to 38-month high of 3.88%**

- Wholesale price inflation rose sharply to an over 3-year high of 3.88% in March, driven by a sharp spike in rates of fuel, power and manufactured items amid the West Asia crisis. Government data showed Wholesale Price Index (WPI)-based inflation rose for the fifth straight month in March as core inflation accelerated, amid softening of primary food items.
- As higher energy prices eventually generalise to other commodity prices, we expect WPI inflation to rise further in the coming months.
- The high WPI inflation in March reflects elevated global commodity prices and the impact of the energy price shock since the beginning of the West Asia conflict.
- WPI inflation was 2.13% in February, and 2.25% in March last year. Inflation in the fuel and power basket spiked to 1.05% in March, from a deflation of 3.78% in February.

❖ **West Asia crisis: India's exports plunge 7.44% in March; trade gap narrows**

Context: Exports posted the steepest fall in five months, declining by 7.44% in March to \$38.92 billion, while imports fell by over 6% due to the West Asia crisis, official data released showed.

- The trade deficit, however, narrowed to a nine-month low of \$20.67 billion in March due to lower imports. Imports dipped by 6.51% to \$59.59 billion in March, driven by a significant decline in inbound shipments of crude oil and gold, the data showed.
- For the full 2025-26 fiscal year, exports grew 0.93% to an all-time high of \$441.78 billion, while imports rose 7.45% to \$775 billion. The trade deficit ballooned to \$333.2 billion due to a jump in gold and silver imports during the last fiscal. Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agrawal told reporters that the country's goods and services exports increased by an estimated 4.22% to an all-time high of \$860.09 billion in 2025-26 against \$825.26 billion in 2024-25.
- He said that despite global challenges, Indian exporters are showing resilience and are registering positive growth.
- The secretary said that **India's exports to the Middle East region fell 57.95% in March.**

❖ **India laps up most of Venezuelan, Russian crude oil**

Context: Amid a global crude oil crisis triggered by the Iran war and the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, India is likely to have lapped up most of the increased crude oil shipments from Venezuela and Russia.

- As per BIMCO, one of the world's largest shipping associations, global crude shipments fell 16% after the war began vis a vis first 9 weeks of the year.
- "This represents a reduction of 7.6 million barrels per day (mbpd) to 38.4 mbpd," BIMCO said.
- With global shipments down, Venezuela increased shipments of crude oil by 0.4 million barrels per day, as did Russia from the Black Sea by 0.8 mbpd.
- "Combined, this accounts for 85% of increased shipments from countries outside of the Persian Gulf. India has been the main destination for the increased shipments," BIMCO said.

- The Hindu has been tracking open-source data for the past two weeks and found at least 17 tankers originating in Russia crossed the Suez Canal and bound for ports in India carrying Russian crude. Some have reached India.
- BIMCO said before the Iran war, the U.S. Energy Information Administration estimated global 2026 oil production at 79.9 mbpd. “The 7.6 mbpd reduction in seaborne shipments thereby means 9.5% of the previously expected crude oil production is currently not reaching markets. The reduction in shipments has naturally been driven by effective closure of the Strait of Hormuz.”
- “The United Arab Emirates managed to increase loadings from ports east of the Strait of Hormuz by 0.7 mbpd while Saudi Arabia increased shipments from Yanbu in the Red Sea by 3.0 mbpd,” it said, adding, shipments from the region fell 9 mbpd compared with earlier this year.
- Even if the Strait of Hormuz is fully reopened, shortages may remain. “[I]t may take a long time for crude oil and other energy shipments to return to previous volumes,” BIMCO’s chief shipping analyst Niels Rasmussen was quoted as saying.

❖ Vaishali wins Candidates, to challenge Ju for world title

Context: R. Vaishali won the Women’s Candidates chess tournament in Cyprus and thus qualified for the World championship match to be played later this year. The Grandmaster from Chennai scored a crushing victory over Russia’s Kateryna Lagno in the final round to emerge as the clear winner.

- Vaishali finished with 8.5 points, half-a-point more than Kazakhstan’s Bibisara Assaubayeva, who was held to a draw by Divya Deshmukh. That draw ensured that Vaishali would go ahead of Assaubayeva in the points table.
- She will meet the reigning World champion China’s Ju Wenjun in the title match. Uzbekistan’s Javokhir Sindarov had won the open section of the Candidates with a round to spare, and he will meet D. Gukesh in the World championship match.
- She started out as the lowest seed. She started slowly, drawing her first four games. And then she lost in the fifth round.
- And yet, on Wednesday night at Pegeia, Cyprus, it was R. Vaishali who had the last smile. She staged a coup at the Women’s Candidates chess tournament. She won the event, becoming the first Indian woman to do it.
- She has qualified to play the World title match. Only one Indian has been there before: Koneru Humpy, one of the strongest players of all time in women’s chess.
- Vaishali will play the World title match against China’s Ju Wenjun, which will be held later this year. She may start that event as the underdog, too. But Ju is unlikely to take her lightly.
- Vaishali has the ability to raise her game at the right time. Like she did in Cyprus. After losing in the fifth round to Zhu Jiner, the top seed, she bounced back admirably, winning her next two rounds to get her campaign back on track.

- Going into the last three rounds, she had a comfortable lead of one point, but she lost to her nemesis Zhu again, in the 12th round (the Candidates is an eight-player round-robin tournament). She drew the penultimate round to share the lead with Bibisara Assaubayeva. She showed her class in the final round encounter against Katerya Lagno to write her own name in history books.
- The Candidates is only the latest in the series of some stunning victories for Vaishali. She has won the Grand Swiss twice, thus earning the qualification for the Candidates in successive editions.
- She is one of the few women to get the Grandmaster title and was part of the Olympiad-winning team. Till a few years ago though, she was overshadowed by her prodigious younger brother R. Praggnanandhaa.
- She once told this correspondent how bad she felt when she first lost to him when he was a little boy. She considers it lucky she has such a strong player at home.
- “And Vaishali can get even better,” Grandmaster Pravin Thipsay tells The Hindu. “I believe she could beat Ju Wenjun.”

❖ Why is the Strait of Hormuz critical to global energy flows?

What is a maritime chokepoint? How does international law govern these waters?

- Since late February, the Strait of Hormuz has emerged as the centre of a deepening energy and security crisis. The escalation followed U.S. and Israeli strikes on Iran, after which Tehran tightened restrictions on the narrow waterway. The situation intensified further this week when President Donald Trump ordered a U.S. naval blockade of vessels sailing to or from Iranian ports. As of April, a ceasefire has allowed a limited number of ships to pass through. However, continued threats and the U.S. blockade have kept most tankers away, reducing daily transits from around 130 vessels to just a few on several days.

What is a maritime chokepoint?

- A maritime chokepoint is a narrow stretch of sea through which a large share of global trade must pass, with no easy alternative route. These are natural geographic bottlenecks created by coastlines, islands, or narrow channels that concentrate shipping into tight corridors. Because ships cannot easily reroute, these chokepoints become critical nodes in the global trading system. Today, between 70 and 80% of the world’s oil moves by sea, and much of it passes through such chokepoints. Even a single incident can disrupt traffic almost immediately. The consequences can be far-reaching. Energy prices tend to rise sharply, shipping costs increase and supply chains can be disrupted. This can lead to shortages of critical commodities, contributing to inflation and slowing economic growth.

Why is the Strait of Hormuz critical?

- The Strait of Hormuz is widely regarded as the world's most important maritime chokepoint. It connects the Persian Gulf to the Gulf of Oman and the Indian Ocean and is a primary export route for oil producers in the region. At its narrowest, the strait is just 21 nautical miles (38 km) wide. Under normal circumstances, about 21 million barrels of oil — roughly one-fifth of global consumption — pass through it each day. In addition to crude oil, large volumes of liquefied natural gas from Qatar and the UAE also move through this route. Nearly 80% of these energy flows go to Asia, making countries such as India, China, Japan, and South Korea dependent on the route.

What are the other key global chokepoints?

- Beyond Hormuz, the global trading system relies on a small set of equally critical maritime chokepoints. These include the Strait of Malacca, the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, the Suez Canal, and the Panama Canal.
- The Strait of Malacca runs between the Malay Peninsula and the Indonesian island of Sumatra. It forms the shortest sea route between the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea, making it a key route for trade between West Asia, Africa, and East Asia.
- The Bab el-Mandeb Strait sits between the Arabian Peninsula and the Horn of Africa. It acts as the southern gateway into the Red Sea, through which ships must pass before reaching the Suez Canal and the Mediterranean. This makes it a crucial link in the trade route between Asia and Europe.
- The Suez Canal is an artificial waterway that cuts across Egypt, connecting the Red Sea to the Mediterranean. It allows ships to avoid the long journey around Africa.
- Further west, the Panama Canal cuts across the narrow Isthmus of Panama, linking the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. This makes it a vital route for trade between Asia, the Americas, and Europe, eliminating the need to sail around South America.

How does international law apply to these waterways?

- The movement of ships through international chokepoints is governed primarily by the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. Under its provisions, straits used for international navigation are subject to the principle of “transit passage”, which allows ships and aircraft of all nations to pass continuously and without obstruction.
- However, countries along the strait can regulate shipping for safety and environmental reasons, but they cannot stop ships from passing through or impose selective restrictions. This right of passage is broadly recognised under international law, though in practice, enforcement depends on naval strength and coordination between countries.

❖ South's seat share won't be cut, say PM and Shah

Context: Amit Shah slams those 'spreading misconceptions'; he tells Lok Sabha seats of five southern States will increase from 129 to 195 and reassures people of Tamil Nadu that their 'power is increasing'.

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Thursday told the Lok Sabha that the Bills to amend the women's reservation law and carry out a fresh delimitation exercise will keep current proportional representation of southern States intact while increasing the absolute number of seats for each State approximately by 50%.
- While the Prime Minister gave an assurance that the proportional distribution of seats among States will be maintained, the Home Minister gave a detailed scenario for each southern State after the three Bills become law.

Revising representation

The data for the tables were sourced from Census of India, 2011; NFHS-5 (2019-21); Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026; Delimitation Bill, 2026

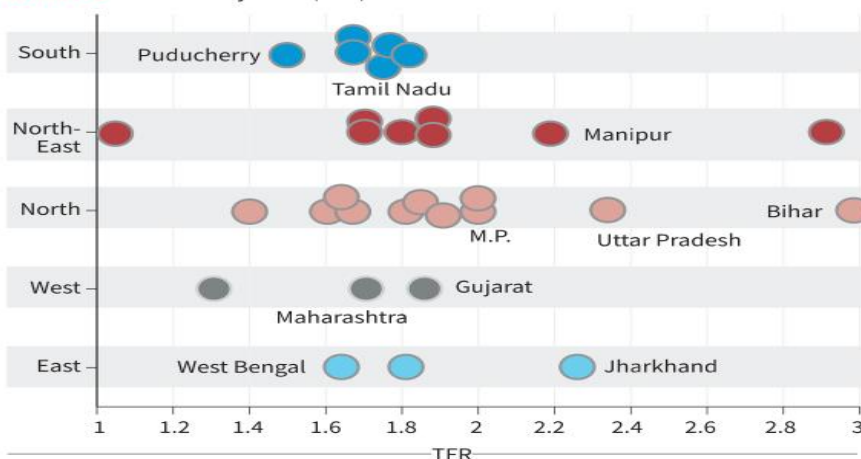


TABLE 2: Region-wise increase in seats, and region-wise share of seats in the current composition and as per the proposed delimitation exercise

Region	% increase in seats	As a share of 543 seats	As a share of 850 seats
East	48.7%	14.4%	13.7%
Hindi-heartland	76.8%	38.1%	43.1%
North-East	33.3%	4.4%	3.8%
North-non-Hindi	58.3%	4.4%	4.5%
South	33.3%	24.3%	20.7%
West	56.4%	14.4%	14.3%
Grand total	56.5%	100%	100%

The South's share in the post-delimitation Parliament will fall from 24.3% to 20.7%, while the Hindi heartland's share will rise from 38.1% to 43.1%

CHART 3: Total fertility rates (TFR) across various States



The data for chart-3 is based on NFHS-5 (2019-21). As shown in the chart, all five southern States have TFR between 1.5 and 1.8, below the replacement level of 2.1

Calculations by The Hindu Data Team

TABLE 1: The table shows seats gained/lost due to the proposed delimitation exercise based on Census 2011 population, when compared with that of a proportional increase in seats. In the table, red depicts States that could lose seats, blue shows those with gains

States/UTs	Change in seats
Uttar Pradesh	13
Maharashtra	3
Bihar	10
West Bengal	-2
Madhya Pradesh	5
Tamil Nadu	-11
Rajasthan	8
Karnataka	-2
Gujarat	2
Andhra Pradesh	-5
Odisha	-3
Telangana	-2
Kerala	-8
Jharkhand	1
Assam	0
Punjab	-1
Chhattisgarh	1
Haryana	2
Delhi	5
Jammu & Kashmir	3
Uttarakhand	-1
Himachal Pradesh	-1
Tripura	0
Meghalaya	-1
Manipur	-1
Nagaland	-1
Goa	-2
Arunachal Pradesh	-2
Puducherry	-1
Mizoram	-1
Chandigarh	-1
Sikkim	-1
Dadra & NH and Daman & Diu	-3
Andaman & Nicobar Islands	-1
Ladakh	-1
Lakshadweep	-1

- The debate followed the introduction of three Bills: the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026, to enable implementation of the women's reservation by the 2029 Lok Sabha polls; the Delimitation Bill, 2026, to readjust parliamentary and Assembly constituencies through a Delimitation Commission; and the Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026, to extend the reservation to the legislatures of Delhi, Puducherry, and Jammu & Kashmir.
- Mr. Shah said that as the Minister piloting the Bill, he was placing this interpretation before the House officially. "I understand my responsibility. Those who are spreading misconceptions perhaps do not understand," he said.

Shah's illustration

- The Minister showed how the representation of the southern States would not go down. The Lok Sabha will have 816 seats after delimitation. He said that in a House of existing 543 members, Karnataka has 28 seats, or 5.15% of MPs. After the Bill is passed, Karnataka's share will become 42, and its percentage of seats in a Lok Sabha of 816 members will be 5.14%. Andhra Pradesh, with its 25 seats (4.60%), will have 38 MPs (4.65%). Likewise, Telangana's 17 seats (3.13%) will become 26 (3.18%), Kerala's 20 seats (3.68%) will touch 30 (3.67%), and Tamil Nadu's 39 seats (7.18%) will become 59 (7.23%).
- Noting that many MPs from Tamil Nadu have come wearing black clothes, he reassured the people of the State that "your power is not decreasing, it is increasing."
- He said the number of Lok Sabha seats in the five southern States will go up from the existing 129 to 195, with the percentage share increasing from 23.76% to 23.87%.
- Participating in the debate, Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra slammed the delimitation and that "if the Constitution Amendment Bill is passed in Parliament, democracy will be finished in India".
- Former Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister and Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav, while expressing support for the women's reservation law, said it should be implemented only after the ongoing Census is complete.
- The Home Minister said he would give his detailed reply in the Lok Sabha on Friday.
- "I will explain, provided they sit to listen and do not walk out. I will explain it with such simplicity that even a child in KG (kindergarten) would understand," Mr. Shah said. The government will need the support from parties outside the National Democratic Alliance to pass the Constitution Amendment Bill since it requires two-thirds majority. In the current Lok Sabha strength of 540 members, the government needs the support of 360 members but is falling short by over 60 MPs.

Caste count

- On remarks made by many MPs that the government does not want to conduct a caste census, he said, "A misconception is being spread that the questions being asked currently in Census 2026 do not mention caste. Those who have studied the Census in detail would know: the Census happens in two parts. First, all houses are identified, and after that, the individuals living there are identified... the caste census comes when the caste of individuals is enumerated."

❖ Trump announces ceasefire between Lebanon and Israel

Context: U.S. President Donald Trump announced a 10-day ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon, effective from midnight.

- “I just had excellent conversations with the Highly Respected President Joseph Aoun, of Lebanon, and Prime Minister Bibi Netanyahu, of Israel. These two Leaders have agreed that in order to achieve PEACE between their Countries, they will formally begin a 10-day ceasefire at 5 P.M. EST,” Mr. Trump wrote in a social media post.
- The ceasefire could strengthen the two-week U.S.-Iran ceasefire which was announced on April 8. Extending the truce to Lebanon has been one of the key demands of Iran. When Mr. Trump announced the Iran truce, Israel said Lebanon was not part of it and stepped up strikes on the country.
- Mr. Trump said the ceasefire would include Iran-backed Hezbollah. “Today they’re going to be having a ceasefire, and that’ll include Hezbollah,” Mr. Trump told presspersons.
- Mr. Netanyahu said that the 10-day ceasefire offered an opportunity for a “historic peace agreement” with Beirut.
- “We have an opportunity to make a historic peace agreement with Lebanon,” he said in a televised speech, adding that Israel will maintain a 10-km “security zone” along the border in southern Lebanon. Hezbollah lawmaker Ibrahim al-Moussawi said the group would respect a ceasefire if Israeli attacks stopped.
- “We in Hezbollah will cautiously adhere to the ceasefire on the condition that it is a comprehensive halt to hostilities against us and that Israel not use it to carry out any assassinations,” he said.
- “We express thanks to Iran for having applied pressure in Lebanon’s favour,” he said, adding that “the ceasefire would not have happened without Iran considering the ceasefire as equal to closing the Strait of Hormuz,” he added.
- Mr. Trump also said on Thursday that Iran has agreed to hand over its store of enriched uranium and that the two sides were “close” to a peace deal ending six weeks of conflict.
- The latest phase of the war between Israel and Hezbollah, a Lebanese Shia militant group and political party, began on March 2, two days after the U.S. and Israel launched the Iran war. Israel has carried out widespread strikes on Beirut and invaded southern Lebanon.

❖ Electors cleared by tribunals till April 21 and 27 can vote: SC

Context: The Supreme Court has declared that electors who were purged from the voter list during the West Bengal special intensive revision, but subsequently cleared by Appellate Tribunals by April 21 or April 27 must be allowed to vote in the Assembly election.

- The order by a Bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant spelt a huge reprieve for citizens whose right to vote was denied in the SIR under the “logical discrepancy” category. Over 34 lakh appeals were filed as on April 11.

- The court, issuing directions in exercise of its extraordinary constitutional powers under Article 142, ordered the Election Commission to publish a “supplementary revised electoral roll” containing the names of those who won their appeals by April 21, ahead of the first phase of polling in the State on April 23, or by April 27, prior to the second phase on April 29.
- “Wherever the Appellate Tribunals are able to decide the appeals by April 21 or April 27, as the case may be, such appellate orders shall be given effect to by issuing a supplementary revised electoral roll, and all necessary consequences with respect to the right to vote shall follow. However, it goes without saying that the mere pendency of appeals preferred by excluded persons before the Appellate Tribunals shall not entitle them to exercise their right to vote,” the court ordered.
- However, those whose appeals remain pending before the tribunals would not be allowed to vote. The order is dated April 13, but published on April 16.
- On April 13, the court had orally observed that the right to be on the electoral roll and to vote in one’s own country was not only constitutional but sentimental.
- It had referred to thousands of voters excluded for “logical discrepancies” and lined up for appeal hearings in West Bengal barely a few days ahead of the Assembly election.
- The court said not all of the 34 lakh and more appeals were filed by those excluded from the electoral roll. A substantial number of appeals were also filed by objectors aggrieved by several inclusions made in the revised electoral rolls.
- “All such appeals are required to be adjudicated by the Appellate Tribunals,” the court noted.
- The Bench noted that there was no reason why the orders of the Appellate Tribunals, whether of inclusion into or exclusion from the electoral roll, must not be effectuated before the State goes to polls on April 23 or April 29.

❖ Finally, Rohith Vemula Bill to safeguard SC/ST students gets Cabinet nod

Context: It lists out about 30 ways in which atrocities may be committed against an SC/ST student in a higher education institution.

- The Karnataka Rohith Vemula (Prevention of Discrimination, Exclusion or Injustice) (Right to Education and Dignity) Bill, 2026, which had been widely debated but stuck in red tape for long, was cleared by the State Cabinet on Thursday.
- Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister H.K. Patil, briefing the press after the Cabinet meeting, said that the Bill — which aims to safeguard the right to education and dignity of the Scheduled Caste (SC), Scheduled Tribe (ST) students, teaching faculty and non-teaching staff in institutions of higher learning — will be moved during the next legislature session.
- “We will not take the Ordinance route for this. There are some modifications from the original draft Bill,” he said, adding that the penal provisions of the Bill may undergo some modifications. It applies to public, private, charitable and deemed-to-be universities in Karnataka.
- As per the provisions of the draft Bill, for any violation of the law, the person in charge of the affairs of the institution is liable to imprisonment and a fine of up to ₹10 lakh.

Atrocities

- The Bill lists out about 30 ways in which atrocities may be committed against an SC/ST student in a higher education institution, ranging from denial of admission, denial of amenities, bringing financial pressure, using casteist slurs, etc.
- It also details the mechanism of enquiry and appeal that an institution needs to adapt. Though an earlier draft of the Bill had been discussed in the Cabinet in June 2025 and was meant to be presented in the monsoon session, it did not happen. Several Dalit organisations had been building pressure on the government to ensure that the Bill is enacted and implemented at the earliest.
- Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi had last year written to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, urging him to implement this law. Following this, the Chief Minister had written back assuring that his government would enact the law to eliminate caste- and identity-based discrimination in educational institutions.

❖ Warning: Your satellite is about to be hit by debris in space

Context: More than 1.5 lakh alerts were issued for Indian satellites during 2025. According to the Indian Space Situational Awareness Report for 2025 (ISSAR 2025), which was recently released, the Combined Space Operations Center (CSPOC) of U.S. Space Command issued more than 1.5 lakh alerts for ISRO's Earth orbiting satellites.

- “There were four collision avoidance manoeuvres (CAM) for Geostationary Orbit (GEO), while 14 CAMs, including one for NISAR (a joint NASA-ISRO mission), which is designated as Risk Mitigation Maneuver in NASA terminology, were performed for Low Earth Orbit (LEO) satellites. Wherever feasible, collision avoidance requirements were met by adjusting orbit maintenance manoeuvres to avoid exclusive CAMs,” according to the ISRO.
- Two CAMs were performed for the Chandrayaan-2 mission. “For the Chandrayaan-2 Orbiter, 16 orbit manoeuvres were carried out, and the plans for manoeuvre were adjusted on two occasions,” the ISRO stated.
- Globally, there were 1.6 lakh close approach alerts in the Low Earth Orbit (LEO).
- The ISSAR-2025 stated that this alarming number of alerts indicates the congestion in space.
- “The sheer number of close approach alerts (~1,60,000) indicates the congestion in space, especially low-Earth orbit. The projected deployment of multiple large constellations indicates a scenario where active satellites may outnumber space debris within the current decade, and a consequent increase in the burden of space traffic coordination,” the ISRO stated.
- The year 2025 witnessed the highest number of launches since the beginning of the space age. There were 328 launch attempts, out of which 315 launches were successful in placing 4,198 known operational satellites.
- “A total of 4,651 objects were added to the space object population in 2025 in a significant rise compared to the previous years. The space object population increased by 2,963 objects from 254 launches in 2024, and 3,135 objects from 212 launches in 2023,” the report states.
- In 2025, a total of 1,911 catalogued objects re-entered the atmosphere.

- According to the report, the number of atmospheric re-entries is less than the previous year.
- “A higher number of re-entries in 2024 can be attributed to the large-scale de-orbiting of Starlink satellites, and more intense solar activity. Among the objects that re-entered in 2025, 1,002 objects were known spacecraft, 657 were debris objects, 108 were rocket bodies, and 144 were of unknown nature,” it stated.

❖ ISRO collaborates with ATREE for sustainable land management

Context: ISRO’s Space Applications Centre (SAC) and the Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE) have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to strengthen collaboration in research, data and knowledge exchange for sustainable land management.

- The partnership will focus on mapping India’s grasslands and other open natural ecosystems, assessing the impact of restoration efforts on degraded lands, and developing improved methodologies for estimating both above- and below- ground carbon.
- By combining the SAC-ISRO’s expertise in large-scale geospatial mapping with ATREE’s interdisciplinary ecological research and field-based experience, the collaboration aims to generate robust policy-relevant data.
- This joint effort seeks to support national and State-level decision-making on land use, climate action, conservation, and rural livelihoods. It will also contribute to the development of scalable and standardised approaches for identifying and monitoring ecosystems such as grasslands, savannas and deserts — landscapes that are ecologically significant but have often received limited attention in policy and planning.
- “The MoU brings together the complementary strengths of SAC-ISRO and ATREE, combining advances in space-based observation with ecological science and field-based insights. It marks an important step towards strengthening how we understand and monitor India’s diverse landscapes, particularly open natural ecosystems. This collaborative effort will contribute to more informed decision-making, while continuing to evolve with inputs from a wider community of researchers, practitioners, and institutions,” the ATREE said.
- The ATREE said the partnership was aligned with India’s commitment to achieving Land Degradation Neutrality by 2030 and contributing to progress across multiple Sustainable Development Goals.

❖ ‘Delimitation with old data can upset electoral framework’

Context: The Supreme Court cautioned in 2025 that delimitation conducted on Census data gathered prior to 2026 risked destabilising the “uniform electoral framework” envisaged by the Constitution and blurring the clear demarcation between constitutional prescription and political discretion.

- The court was dealing with a plea for the conduct of delimitation of Assembly seats in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. The petitioner, K. Purushottam Reddy, had argued that by conducting delimitation in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir in 2022, the Centre was discriminating against the two States. The plea had sought parity.

- The court highlighted that even “legitimate expectations” of the electorate could not overawe the constitutional embargo under the provisos to Articles 82 and 170 of the Constitution that “no readjustment of seats or division of States into territorial constituencies can be undertaken until the relevant data from the first census conducted after 2026 is published”. The court said isolated departures from the constitutional embargo for the sake of two States would amount to an impermissible deviation from the equality principle embedded in **Article 14 of the Constitution**.
- Rejecting the plea, the court held that a “contravention of the constitutional timeline provided under **Article 170(3) would not only destabilise the uniform electoral framework envisaged by the Constitution but also blur the clear demarcation between constitutional prescription and political discretion**”.
- The stand of the top court gains significance with the Parliament holding a three-day Special Session from Thursday to debate the **Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill and Delimitation Bill**.

Judicial review limited

- The Supreme Court has consistently held that though judicial review of delimitation was limited, the court could intervene if the exercise was capricious and unreasonable.
- The court, in the 1975 case of Indira Nehru Gandhi versus Raj Narain, said the Constitution empowered Parliament with the task of framing electoral laws for “free and fair elections”, which included “delimitation of constituencies and allotment of seats” to Parliament and the State legislatures.
- The Constitution expected the legislature to ensure that these laws upheld representative and equitable democracy. On that trust, it had limited the power of the courts to intervene.
- The court’s 2024 decision in the Kishorchandra Chhanganlal Rathod case has tilted away from the inviolability of the delimitation exercise. It held that it could certainly intervene if the delimitation was found to be “manifestly arbitrary and irreconcilable to constitutional values”.

❖ Kerala botanist wins WWF award for app

Context: A botany researcher who developed an AI-powered mobile application to identify invasive plant species in Kerala has been awarded the WWF (World Wide Fund for Nature) National Award.

- N. Alim Yusuf, a researcher at the Malabar Botanical Garden and Institute for Plant Sciences (MBGIPS), Olavanna, Kozhikode, received the honour for his innovative application capable of identifying nearly 100 invasive plant species recorded in Kerala.
- He was presented the award at the National ECHO Youth Innovation Summit 2026, held as part of the International Youth Biodiversity Conference in Telangana. As part of the recognition, he will also receive a seed grant of ₹1.5 lakh from the WWF to further develop and scale his project. His application, Neophyte ID, was earlier launched at the Kerala Science Congress held in Kochi in February this year.
- Powered by the advanced machine learning model YOLOv11, the app allows users to identify whether a plant is invasive simply by capturing its image.

- Available in both Malayalam and English, it also integrates geospatial tracking to map the spread of invasive species, offering valuable data for researchers and the Forest department.

❖ Auto sector reaches 'broad' consensus on CAFE-III norms

Context: Latest proposal applies flatter compliance curve across five years rather than steep annual tightening, removes relaxations for lighter vehicles.

- A “broad” consensus emerged on the long-contested, upcoming carbon emission norms for cars for 2027 at a high-level inter-ministerial meeting on Thursday, with small car makers making only “minor suggestions”, industry sources said.
- The draft proposal of Carbon Average Fuel Efficiency-3 floated by the Bureau of Energy Efficiency in September 2025, which has gone through multiple iterations, had reached a deadlock as the industry remained split between small and large car manufacturers over relaxations to the former.
- The latest proposal circulated last week applies a flatter compliance curve across five years rather than steep annual tightening, and removes relaxations offered to lighter vehicles.
- Auto industry sources said there was a “broad agreement” over the latest version of CAFE-3 norms at a discussion held with the industry representatives and top officials of the Ministry of Power, Ministry of Heavy Industries and Ministry of Road Transport and Highways.
- Some had sought that the government make no further changes to it and notify the latest draft.
- “While it is a stretch to meet some of the provisions, we have agreed to comply for the larger national interest,” a top industry source at a Mumbai-based auto firm seeking anonymity said adding they appreciated the Centre’s efforts to incorporate industry views. Another industry representative also seeking not to be named said small car makers remained dissatisfied and had offered suggestions, without elaborating. Some had proposed minor changes to the Centre’s super credit scheme.
- Last week’s draft proposes a flatter slope — .00158 instead of 0.002 in the first year and .00131 in the fifth year.
- The slope, expressed in grams of CO₂ per kilometre per unit of vehicle mass, determines how emission targets vary with a vehicle’s weight. It also removes weight-based relaxations for smaller cars. But a flatter curve is understood to have the effect of tightening targets for heavier vehicles while reducing the targets for those below the industry average weight of 1,229 kg.
- The latest version also comprises a super credit scheme within which battery electric vehicles and range extended electric vehicles have the maximum super credits at 3. Within this scheme, the sale of each EV is counted as a sale of multiple EVs helping raise the average of the fleet and in reaching the emission targets.
- The September draft had split the industry, with Maruti on one side and Mahindra and Tata on the other. Larger carmakers argued that the weight-based carve-out favoured Maruti’s small-car-heavy portfolio while shifting the compliance burden onto companies that had invested heavily in EVs and cleaner technologies.

❖ Constitution Amendment Bill, part of delimitation package, defeated

Context: 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.

- A united Opposition 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 a post 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 reservation from delimitation. Mr. Shah categorically rejected the second demand, calling it a “trap”. Both he and Prime Minister Narendra Modi had earlier given verbal assurances that all States would see a uniform 50%

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

increase in Lok Sabha seats as the House expands from the current cap of 550 to about 850 members.

- “I say to these people, especially to the Congress, that just by raising slogans in speeches, the backward class of this country will not consider you their well-wishers,” he said. Mr. Shah also hit out at claims that Muslim women should be included in the reservation framework. “The Constitution does not provide for reservation on the basis of religion and BJP will never allow this,” he asserted.

❖ Iran declares Strait of Hormuz open; U.S. blockade to continue

Context: A day after U.S. President Donald Trump announced a 10-day ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon, Iran said the Strait of Hormuz is “completely open” for commercial vessels for the remainder of the two-week U.S.-Iran truce.

- Mr. Trump “thanked” Iran for reopening the waterway but said the U.S. blockade of Iranian ports would continue until there is a deal between Tehran and Washington. Oil prices fell after the strait was declared open.
- “In line with the ceasefire in Lebanon, the passage for all commercial vessels through the Strait of Hormuz is declared completely open for the remaining period of the ceasefire, on the coordinated route as already announced by Ports and Maritime Organisation of Iran,” Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi wrote in a social media post on Friday.

• About 20% of the world’s crude oil supply passed through the strait, which links the Persian Gulf to the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea, before the U.S. and Israel launched their war on Iran. The waterway also carries a significant share of global LNG exports, mainly from Qatar.

- After the war broke out, Iran took control of the waterway. Daily ship traffic through the Strait fell sharply, dropping from more than 100 vessels a day to single digits. Mr. Trump welcomed Iran’s decision. “Iran has just announced that the Strait of Hormuz is fully open and ready for full passage. Thank you,” he said in a post in capital letters. He also said Iran, “with the help of the US, has removed or is removing all sea mines” in the waterway. “Iran has agreed to never close the Strait of Hormuz again. It will no longer be used as a weapon against the world,” he added.
- Mr. Trump, however, said the U.S. blockade of Iranian ports, which he announced on April 12, “will remain in full force and effect., until such time as our transaction with Iran is 100% complete. This process should go very quickly in that most of the points are already negotiated.”
- The U.S. Central Command has said it has enforced a complete blockade of ships going to and coming from Iranian ports, though shipping data suggest some Iran-linked ships have crossed the U.S. blockade. The war in Lebanon was a key sticking point in the U.S.-Iran ceasefire that was announced on April 8. Iran said Lebanon was covered under the ceasefire agreement, but Israel initially rejected it and said its war against Hezbollah would continue.
- Israel said it would halt attacks on Lebanon but its troops would stay in the seized territory in southern Lebanon.

- Mr. Trump said the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz was not linked to the Lebanon truce. “The deal is not tied, in any way, to Lebanon, but we will make Lebanon great again,” said Mr. Trump, who also thanked Pakistan and its “great Prime Minister and Field Marshal, two fantastic people”.
- “The ceasefire was nothing but a result of Hezbollah’s steadfastness and the unity of the Axis of Resistance; and we will deal with this ceasefire with caution, and we will remain together until the full realisation of victory,” Iran’s Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf said on Thursday.
- Brent crude futures were down roughly 10% on Friday, extending earlier losses, at below \$90 a barrel. The U.S. benchmark WTI was also down 10% at around \$82 a barrel.
- **India expressed formal support for the Israel-Lebanon ceasefire.** Speaking at the weekly press briefing, Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said India favours “any step” that will end hostilities in the West Asian region.
- France and Britain said on Friday they will lead a multinational mission to ensure freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz, while emphasising the force would be entirely defensive and only deployed once lasting peace in the region was agreed.

❖ Cabinet approves AI Centre of Excellence at E-City

Context: The State Cabinet has approved the establishment of a Centre of Excellence for Artificial Intelligence in Biotechnology (AI-CoE) at the Institute of Bioinformatics and Applied Biotechnology (IBAB) in Electronics City (Phase 1), Bengaluru.

- The centre will be set up over a period of four years with a total outlay of ₹20 crore, in partnership with IBAB and the Centre for Cellular and Molecular Platforms (C-CAMP).
- “As we enter the decade of deep tech, our focus is on building future-ready capabilities at the intersection of Artificial Intelligence and biotechnology. This Centre of Excellence will strengthen our research ecosystem, accelerate innovation, and enable Karnataka to lead in high-impact, next-generation technologies,” said Priyank Kharge, Minister for Rural Development & Panchayat Raj and IT & Biotechnology, on Thursday.
- He added that the State government, through its Departments of Electronics, IT, Biotechnology, and Science & Technology, is proactively investing in emerging technologies, and taking decisive steps to strengthen the State’s AI and deep tech ecosystem.
- **The Cabinet has also approved the transfer of a 51% stake in the Karnataka Technology & Innovation Museum Foundation (KTIMF) to Unboxing BLR Foundation.**
- **The museum will be developed on the NGEF campus at Baiyappanahalli, in east Bengaluru, under a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model, with a total project cost of ₹100 crore. Of this, ₹49 crore will be contributed by the State government and ₹51 crore by the private partner.**

❖ H5N1 virus detected in Hesaraghatta poultry centre near Bengaluru

Context: The detection of H5N1 avian influenza virus at a poultry training centre in Mathkuru village in Hesaraghatta near Bengaluru has prompted authorities to initiate containment measures as per protocol.

- The infection was confirmed on April 14 based on a report from the **National Institute of High Security Animal Diseases (NIHSAD), Bhopal**. Following this, rapid response teams from the State, District and Primary Health Centre levels visited the site on April 16.
- The area within a 3-km radius has been declared an infected zone, while a 10-km radius has been notified as a surveillance zone. As part of containment efforts, 7,444 birds were culled, and over 14,788 eggs and 2,250 kg of poultry feed were scientifically disposed of on April 15 under the supervision of the Animal Husbandry Department.
- Ten staff involved in the culling operation have been placed under quarantine and are under medical observation with administration of Oseltamivir. The affected premises has been declared a prohibited area for one year.
- Health Department officials said surveillance has been intensified in surrounding areas. Two villages with a population of 3,422 that fall within the 3-km infected zone and 17 villages with a population of 22,395 that fall within the 3–10 km surveillance zone are being monitored.
- Health workers and ASHA staff are conducting door-to-door visits and will continue fever surveillance for the next 10 days. Hospitals have been instructed to report any suspected cases immediately.
- Private Hospitals have also been alerted to report ILI and SARI cases on the IHIP portal. Besides, adequate stocks of PPE kits, masks, Oseltamivir, viral transport media (VTM), and throat swab kits have been ensured at nearby primary health centres.
- Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao said no human cases of the infection had been reported so far and urged the public not to panic.
- “There is no need for panic, but people must remain cautious,” he said.
- He advised the public to avoid contact with sick or dead birds and to immediately inform the Animal Husbandry or Health Department in case of any suspicion. He added that properly cooked poultry meat and eggs are safe for consumption.
- Officials said the Health Department is prepared to handle any eventuality.

❖ SC asks if judges must rise above religious beliefs in matters of conscience

Context: The Supreme Court sought a clarification from senior advocate and jurist Rajeev Dhavan whether judges, functioning as a constitutional court, must rise above their own personal religious consciousness while called on to examine matters of freedom of conscience.

- The question came from Justice Ahsanuddin Amanullah, who is a member of the nine-judge Bench headed by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant hearing the **Sabarimala review case primarily on the extent to which courts could judicially review religious practices, and whether an “inquisitorial” scrutiny would be a breach of Article 25 (freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion) and Article 26 (right to manage religious affairs).**

- “You said freedom of conscience has a very wide amplification. Are you hinting that as judges, as a constitutional court, religion and conscience cannot be equated as religion may be personal to me, but then when I have to judge, I have to rise above that religious consciousness to a level where I balance it with constitutional provisions and see the larger picture emerging from it?” Justice Amanullah asked Mr. Dhavan.
- Justice B.V. Nagarathna, also on the Bench, asked if Mr. Dhavan was arguing that “conscience was something larger than religion” or whether conscience should take its colour from religion. She asked if conscience and religion were co-terminus.
- “So far we have been told ‘that when it is religion, do not touch’... Probably as a constitutional authority, and under the scheme of the Constitution, when we are called upon to get into the area of conscience, we should not be restricted by the term ‘religion’? Justice Amanullah asked.
- Mr. Dhavan responded that the persona of a judge cuts across the Constitution. He illustrated that a judge cannot be identified with his personal religion when asked to examine a matter of faith and conscience. He said the **freedom of conscience, which is mentioned separately from the right to freely profess, practice and propagate religion in Article 25, is an expansive right. “There are two rights. They are two vital rights. Exercise of the right to conscience must be done respectfully and in a bona fide manner,”** he said.

Internal right

- Justice M.M. Sundresh indicated that freedom of conscience was an internal right to nurse a belief while the freedom of religion was an external manifestation of that conscience.

❖ India not to host COP33 in 2028, government confirms

Context: India has withdrawn its offer to host the 33rd edition of the Conference of the Parties (COP), scheduled for 2028, the government confirmed. “We can confirm that India has withdrawn its offer to host COP33.

- Several issues were taken into account, but India remains fully committed to meeting its responsibilities towards (mitigating) climate change. **We are one of the G-20 countries that have fully met their Paris Agreement commitments, and we continue to build on our green agenda,”** Randhir Jaswal, spokesperson, External Affairs Ministry, said. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had in 2023 announced India’s interest in hosting COP33.

❖ Menstrual leave: State to implement law with penal provisions to deter violators

Context: The legislation that will be brought in to implement the menstrual leave policy in Karnataka, following the recent High Court order, will include penal provisions to check violations by employers, thus providing teeth to the legislation.

- Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister H.K. Patil said the government will enact a comprehensive legislation on the matter soon and this law will include penal provisions to ensure it is implemented uniformly across all sectors.

- The State government, which issued a Government Order (GO) on menstrual leave in November 2025, introduced the **Karnataka Women Well Being Leave Bill, 2025 in December 2025, a comprehensive legislation which defines a menstruating person to encompass girls, women, and transgender individuals up to the age of 52.**
- However, it is yet to receive Cabinet approval before being piloted to the legislature.
- Incidentally, there is another petition pending before the Karnataka High Court in Bengaluru that has challenged the power of the government to issue and implement the GO. However, no stay has been placed on the GO.

Not implemented

- In the absence of a mechanism to address violations in the GO, a majority of manufacturing industries have failed to implement the provision of one day of paid menstrual leave per month for female employees aged 18 to 52.
- Garment industries, which are dominated by women, have not implemented the leave, while the State government has excluded scheme workers such as ASHA, Anganwadi and mid-day meal workers — whose numbers run into several lakhs — from the policy.

Unorganised sector

- The service sector, including retail, IT and banking, has largely not implemented the order, while the unorganised sector — including domestic and construction workers — despite having an employer-employee relationship, has also not complied with it.

Unions' stand

- “A majority of employers have so far refused to comply with the GO on the grounds that it had been challenged. In fact, many women workers often ask us about its implementation,” said All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) leader Jayamma, who was part of the 18-member committee that recommended menstrual leave.
- “Even the GO by the State government is flawed. Scheme workers have been left out, along with domestic workers and construction workers, in the unorganised sector. There is no reference as to who will monitor and implement the policy. A strong legislation is required.”
- The Karnataka High Court order has provided hope to about four lakh women employed in the women-dominated garment industries in the State, and we will seek its implementation at the earliest, said Prathibha R., president of Garment and Textile Workers Union.
- “The garment sector has not implemented the policy, and the case in the High Court was being cited despite our plea. The sector prefers to employ women because of cheap labour, but does not want to provide benefits,” she said.

❖ PNGRB close to finalising bids for four LPG pipelines

Context: The suo motu proposal for the pipeline infrastructure is part of the Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board's objective of doing away with road transportation of bulk LPG by 2030.

- Seeking to further strengthen the infrastructure of liquified petroleum gas (LPG) and ensure storage through pipeline infrastructure, the Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB) informed on Friday that it was in the process of concluding bid proposals of four such pipelines.

Collectively, the four pipelines would span across approximately 2,500 kilometres and attract an investment of about ₹12,500 crore. The suo motu tendering of the overall LPG pipeline infrastructure is part of the regulator's broader objective of doing away with road transportation of bulk LPG by 2030.

- “As part of the initiative, nine LPG pipeline projects were identified for development. PNGRB initiated suo motu proposal and carried out bidding of these pipelines,” the regulator said in a statement. “Currently, PNGRB is in the process of concluding bid proposals of four pipelines,” it added.
- The first pipeline is from Telangana’s Cherlapally to Nagpur in Maharashtra, the second from Maharashtra’s Shikrapur to Hubli in Karnataka and thereon to Goa, the third from Odisha’s Paradip to Chhattisgarh’s Raipur and the fourth from Uttar Pradesh’s Jhansi to Uttarakhand’s Sitarganj.
- Other than expanding on the infrastructure, the regulator emphasised that the pipeline infrastructure would enable storing the hydrocarbon cooking and alternative automobile gas through pipeline infrastructure so that they could be utilised in times of crisis, and avert the accidental risks associated with transportation by road.
- “These pipelines would not only improve safety and efficiency in the supply chain, but would also prove to be more economical over other modes of transportation,” it added.
- PNGRB also said that averting road transportation via pipelines would help reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Separately, the regulator informed that State-owned Indian Oil had won the bid for laying, building, operating and expanding the Kochi - Kanyakumari - Thoothukudi Natural Gas pipeline. The proposed pipeline covers approximately 425 km with a system capacity of 6.84 MMSCMD, including the common carrier capacity.

❖ Banking FDI for nuclear power projects on cards

Context: Initiatives to secure infusion of foreign direct investment (FDI) and from the banking sector to finance nuclear power projects are in the pipeline and headed for inter-ministerial consultation, informed Seema Jain, Member of Finance at the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE).

- Speaking at the inaugural session of the Workshop on the **SHANTI Act, 2025** here, she said, “Financing will require all sorts of innovative measures to happen so that the kind of money and financial space is made for the sector.” “For that, banking FDI initiatives are also in the pipeline, the **Atomic Energy Commission has already approved the [FDI] policy**, and is now going for inter-ministerial consultations,” Ms. Jain added.
- Earlier in her address, Ms. Jain had observed that considering a standard baseline cost requirement for setting up of a nuclear reactor is about ₹22 crore per megawatt, instituting 100 gigawatts of nuclear energy-based power would require about ₹20 lakh crore financing.

-----All the best-----