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No. 5, AKS Nagar, Near Gandhi Park, Coimbatore - 641 001

GS Paper I – Geography

Date: 16.04.26

Dry days

As India faces a rainfall deficit, it must make preparations for the worst

After the crest, the trough is inevitable. Following two years of surplus rainfall, India is likely staring at a significant shortfall in the coming monsoon. The India Meteorological Department (IMD) in its April forecast has predicted an 8% deficit, or “below normal” rainfall, coming June-September. There is a five percent margin of error in this estimate but going by IMD’s track record, there are many more times it has expected a ‘normal’ monsoon only for India to end up with a drought than it has forecast a drought and been proved wrong. In fact, when IMD warns of a deficit in April, history shows that India often experiences a drought. The agency, in its official lexicon, never uses the term ‘drought’ and only refers to a deficit below 90% as “deficient.” In the April of 2015, IMD issued a “below normal monsoon” forecast for the 2015 south-west monsoon season, predicting seasonal rainfall at 93% of the long-term average, again, ‘below normal.’ India ended up much worse at 86% Long Period Average (LPA). IMD expects a depressed monsoon this time in the second crucial half of the monsoon (August and September) on the back of weather models indicating an El Nino, the cyclical phenomenon where a heating of the central equatorial Pacific Ocean beyond 1 degree Celsius has corresponded nine out of 16 times since 1950 to a deficient monsoon.

The timing of an El Nino matters. If the temperature rise happens outside of the monsoon months, its impact on the monsoon is not as threatening. In 2019, for instance, the IMD expected less than normal rainfall in April because El Nino-like conditions were on the horizon. Paradoxically, India ended up with above normal rainfall because that heating was not as strong as expected. This year too, the IMD expects the Indian Ocean Dipole would counter the desiccating impact of the El Nino. In a year where the most concerning clouds as of now are the war-like ones over West Asia, shortage of gas and fertilizer could worsen farmer sentiment on top of the weak rains. The government should immediately begin preparations to shore up fertilizer stocks, equitable water distribution, particularly in reservoirs that are likely to be stressed, and provide timely advisories to farmers on optimal sowing practices.



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GS Paper II – Polity

States' seats will rise 50% after delimitation: Centre

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

Varghese K. George
NEW DELHI

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 on Thursday.

"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



INDIA bloc leaders after a meeting to discuss the proposed Bills on delimitation in New Delhi on Wednesday. SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

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

'INDIA bloc will vote against delimitation'

NEW DELHI

The Opposition INDIA bloc have decided to vote against the delimitation provisions in the proposed Bills, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said on Tuesday while underlining that the bloc's opposition was not against women's quota. » PAGE 12

are reading bits and pieces and interpreting them as reducing the relative strength of the South are missing the big picture," the functionary said.

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GS Paper II – Polity

Chhattisgarh nod for setting up panel to prepare UCC draft

The aim is to 'simplify laws, promote religious and gender equality'; Justice Ranjana Desai (retd.) to head committee; after Uttarakhand, Gujarat, Chhattisgarh is third State to take this initiative

Shubhomoy Sikdar
RAIGARH/RAIPUR

The Chhattisgarh Cabinet on Wednesday approved the constitution of a high-level committee to prepare a draft of the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) for its implementation in the State.

After Uttarakhand implemented the UCC last year and the Gujarat Assembly last passed the UCC Bill, 2026, this March, Chhattisgarh has become the third BJP-ruled State that has taken an initiative in this direction.

The announcement was made after a Cabinet meeting chaired by Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai was held at the Mahadi Bhawan, even as a press statement from the government



Vishnu Deo Sai. FILE PHOTO

said the aim of the exercise was "simplifying laws to promote religious and gender equality".

"The Cabinet approved the constitution of a high-level committee under the chairpersonship of Justice Ranjana Prakash Desai (retd) to prepare the draft UCC. The Chief Minister has been authorised to nominate members of the

committee," the statement read.

It added that at present, matters such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, adoption, maintenance, and family disputes were governed by separate personal laws across religions. "As envisaged under Article 44 of the Constitution of India, the move towards a UCC is aimed at ensuring legal uniformity, simplifying judicial processes, and promoting religious as well as gender equality," said a government official.

The committee would undertake extensive consultations with citizens, organisations, and subject experts, and may also invite feedback through a dedicated web portal. "The draft will be placed

before the Cabinet and subsequently introduced in the Assembly following due legal procedures," it stated.

Cong. criticises move

The Opposition Congress has criticised the move claiming it would harm the tribals who constitute a major portion of the State's population.

"If the UCC were implemented in Chhattisgarh, the biggest harm would be to the tribals. The tribals are the only ones in the State who have special Constitutional protections," said State Congress president Deepak Baij. He added that over 32% of the population in Chhattisgarh is tribal, protected tribes, who have certain special rights in the Constitution.



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GS Paper II – Polity

Women's reservation and delimitation should be delinked

Parliament is scheduled to discuss two far reaching Bills ostensibly for the implementation of the one-third reservation of seats for women in Parliament and State Assemblies. The Bills are the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill which seeks to raise the number of seats in Parliament to 850 seats with one-third reserved for women "after an exercise of delimitation is undertaken for this purpose", and The Delimitation Bill, 2026, which sets up the Delimitation Commission to redraw boundaries of existing seats on the basis of the "latest Census figures published on the date of the constitution of the commission", which is the 2011 Census. The government expects the Opposition to turn itself into a rubber stamp and approve utterly flawed proposals or be damned as being anti-women.

Unnecessary linkages

In September 2023, to blunt mounting criticism of its failure to legislate on women's reservation, the government hastily pushed through the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam (NSVA) in a so-called "special session", just months before the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. This legislation was markedly different from the Bill which had been adopted by the Rajya Sabha in 2010. If that Bill, which had gone through several rounds of parliamentary scrutiny, had been presented by the government, as it should have been, women's reservation could have been implemented from the 2024 elections itself. Instead, the Modi government, through the NSVA, linked women's reservation to the proposed Census and delimitation. During the ensuing debate almost all Opposition parties expressed concern that these unnecessary linkages would not only deny women the right of reservation in the 2024 Lok Sabha and subsequent Assembly elections but would put its implementation in limbo contingent on other factors. The government responded that Opposition fears were unfounded and that a Delimitation Commission would be set up after the 2024 elections and that the Census would be completed in time. None of this happened.

What did happen is that the number of women in Parliament after the 2024 elections decreased from 78 to 74 which is just 13.6% of the total House. Additionally, in 2024 and 2025, State Assembly elections were held in 10 States with a total of 1,276 assembly seats. Only 123 women, which is less than 10%, were elected. This is the real consequence of the unwarranted linkages introduced by the government.

The 131st Amendment Bill not only retains the flawed linkages of the NSVA, it adds a third linkage of increased seats. Thus in the name of women's reservation, the government wants to



Brinda Karat

is a senior leader of the Communist Party of India (Marxist)

achieve three aims – first, it wants to scrap the principle of delimitation based on present population criteria by using the outdated 2011 Census as the base; secondly, by using the 2011 Census, it wants to take pressure off the urgency for a caste census; and finally, it wants women's reservation to be implemented only as part of a delimitation exercise whose aim is to redraw boundaries of seats to suit the ruling regime. That is, women's reservation is once again being held hostage to the fulfilment of other agendas.

The importance of Census data

Till now in India, all the four major national exercises of delimitation of the boundaries of seats have been based on the last available Census data. The number of Scheduled Castes (SC)/Scheduled Tribes (ST) reserved seats are based on the proportion of SC/ST communities in the total population. As per the 1971 Census, the absolute number of seats reserved for SCs and STs was 79 and 41 respectively. This increased by 11 seats after the 2001 Census and subsequent delimitation with 84 seats reserved for SCs and 47 for STs with their combined proportion in the population being 24.4%. From 2001 to 2026, the population would certainly have registered a bigger increase. In the name of urgency for women's reservation, implementing a delimitation exercise which ignores the current population of SCs and STs will be a *manuvadi* injustice to oppressed communities, denying them a fair increase in the proportion of reserved seats. It will negatively impact the women of these communities, since the numbers of seats constituting one-third of reserved seats for SC/ST women will also be less than their rightful share.

Delimitation is a highly politically and sensitive issue. The last national delimitation exercise took around six years to complete, from 2002 to 2008, and was implemented in the 2009 elections. Since then, two State-level delimitation exercises have been done for Assam and J&K, directly under the Election Commission of India. Both of these have been strongly criticised for the highly undemocratic and sectarian way in which the boundaries of the seats were redrawn violating the principles of the Delimitation Act, 2002. To put it plainly, in both States the interests of the central ruling regime were advanced by manipulating the creation of seats in such a way as to minimise the impact of voters of particular communities seen as being opposed to the ruling regime. It can be reasonably anticipated that the coming delimitation will be highly contested. Why should women's reservation be linked to such an exercise? Further, even if the proportion of the present

number of seats in different States is to be maintained according to the present government proposal, questions still remain as to the disadvantages of States where population growth is less. All this needs further discussion and cannot be pushed through.

Betrayal of women's reservation

Women's reservation is a stand-alone step which requires a stand-alone law. The 2010 Bill adopted by the Rajya Sabha and supported by the then Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) had no such linkages. I remember Sushma Swaraj, then the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, rushing to congratulate us, then in the Upper House, for the historic passage of the Bill even though she knew that her party would get no credit. But there are no women leaders in the BJP today who would have the courage to call the government out for this; the second betrayal of the women's reservation issue. The only reason that the government is insisting on such a linkage is because it wants to rush through the delimitation process in the name of implementing women's reservation. The onus of delay will be shifted to all those who object to the delimitation boundaries suggested by a Commission packed with government supporters which is what the composition of the proposed Bill suggests.



It is time to say no to the instrumentalisation of the issue of women's reservation. Women's reservation has been fought for by millions of women across India, for decades, to strengthen democracy, not by the denial of rights of SCs and STs and not by bulldozing democratic norms. Those committed to women's reservation must vote against these Bills. The solution lies in going back to the 2010 Bill without linkages to delimitation and the Census. A simple amendment to the 106 Constitution Amendment law passed in 2023 will suffice: in Clause 334A, delete the sentence, one-third reservation for women will commence "after an exercise of delimitation is undertaken for this purpose after the relevant figures for the first census taken after commencement of the Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-eighth Amendment) Act, 2023 have been published". This will break the link. As far as increase of seats and delimitation is concerned, these are separate issues which should be discussed. As and when Parliament decides on an increase in seats, automatically the framework of women's reservation too will change. Our message to the government is: stop your manipulations, one-third reservation for women without linkages now.

Women's reservation is a stand-alone step which requires a stand-alone law



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GS Paper II – Polity

Implications of increasing the size of the Lok Sabha

The government has circulated a set of three Bills related to delimitation and women's reservation. These Bills are expected to be taken up in the extended Budget session from April 16-18, and could affect the working of Parliament in several ways. The Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill proposes the following. The limit on the size of the Lok Sabha will be increased from 550 to 850. The number of seats for each State in the Lok Sabha will be based on its proportion in the population of all States. This population will be based on such Census (not necessarily the latest) that is specified by Parliament by passing a law. The Bill also clarifies that the reservation of one-third of seats for women will be effective after a delimitation, and will be valid for 15 years. The Delimitation Bill sets up a Delimitation Commission, and its provisions are similar to the last one set up in 2002. Importantly, it requires the latest published Census to be used. Therefore, the next delimitation is proposed to be based on the 2011 Census. The third Bill extends these provisions to the three Union Territories with legislatures: Delhi, J&K, and Puducherry.

Huge impact

There are several implications of these proposals. First, the freezing of seats until the first Census after 2026 has been removed. Instead, seats will be decided based on the 2011 Census. An immediate implication is that the relative share of seats in the Lok Sabha for each State will change. The biggest losers are Kerala and Tamil Nadu, while the main gainers are Rajasthan, Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. While the proposal will equalise the value of the vote of every citizen regardless of their State of residence, it will lead to MPs from U.P. and Bihar (25% of total seats, up from 22%) having significant power to shape national policy.

Second, the Constitution Amendment Bill provides Parliament the flexibility to determine the periodicity of delimitation and the Census



M.R. Madhavan

Co-founder and President of PRS Legislative Research

These Bills will have significant impact on the composition of Parliament and its functioning, and are being introduced with no public discussion

that will be used for the purpose. Currently, the Constitution requires delimitation after every Census, and to be based on that Census (currently, there is a freeze on this until 2026). The Amendment requires just a simple majority to determine whether to do delimitation, and which Census to use. The government of the day, as it would command the majority in the Lok Sabha, can effectively make this decision. They would need to pass it in the Rajya Sabha too, but that House will be weakened by the same Bill, which brings us to the third implication. While the size of the Lok Sabha is being increased, there is no proposal to change the size of the Rajya Sabha. This affects the relative importance of the two Houses. For example, if the two Houses disagree on a Bill, the President may summon a joint sitting. In such a scenario, each member of Parliament has one vote, so the Lok Sabha with 543 seats has 2.2 times the votes of the Rajya Sabha with 245 seats. If we assume that the Lok Sabha will now have 815 seats (an increase of 50%), it will have 3.3 times the strength of the Rajya Sabha. The effect can be seen with an example. Say, the government has 53% seats in the Lok Sabha (433 out of 815) and just 40% in the Rajya Sabha (98 out of 245 seats). The government will still be able to get its Bills through a joint session as it has a majority of total seats. This imbalance will also play out in elections to the offices of the President and the Vice-President, where each MP across both Houses has an equal vote.

A fourth implication is that the limit on the size of the Council of Ministers will increase. The Constitution was amended in 2003 to limit the Council's size to 15% of the Lok Sabha. If Lok Sabha is expanded to have 815 MPs, the limit on the size of the Central cabinet also increases from 81 to 122. Fifth, the increased size of the Lok Sabha reduces the opportunity for an MP to

participate in the deliberations of the House. MPs ask questions to Ministers to hold them to account, and raise important issues in the zero hour. Questions and zero hour interventions are chosen by lottery, and an increased size of the Lok Sabha reduces the probability of getting balloted. The issue is exacerbated by the fact that Parliament sits for less than 70 days a year.

Global precedents

Other countries also have large legislatures. For example, the U.K. House of Commons has 650 members. It has evolved processes to provide opportunities to MPs to participate in discussions. It averages over 150 sittings a year, and also has a robust committee system.

Parliamentary committees can supplement deliberations. However, the Indian Parliament is found lacking in this respect. For example, every Bill in the U.K. Parliament has to be examined by committees of both Houses. In India, less than a fifth of the Bills are referred to Committees.

Sixth, there could be a similar impact on State legislatures. Though these Bills do not have any provisions regarding the size of State legislatures, that decision will be taken by the Delimitation Commission. If they decide to follow the same rationale and increase the size by 50%, some States could have oversized legislatures. U.P. could end up having over 600 seats while West Bengal and Maharashtra could reach about 450.

These Bills will have significant impact on the composition of Parliament and its functioning, and are being introduced with no public discussion. It is imperative that such Bills go through intensive deliberation, both outside and inside Parliament. At the very least, they should be referred to a parliamentary committee, which can engage with experts and the wider public before giving its recommendations.



WOMEN'S RESERVATION



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GS Paper II – Social Issue

Devious menace

Loan apps function in a regulatory dark area and promise easy credit

In the case of Nithin Raj, the first-year dental student in Kannur who died last week after falling from atop a five-storey building, the police have identified harassment over a loan that he secured via an app as a contributing factor. His death is the third high-profile suicide linked to loan apps in Kerala within four months. Since January, over 35 complaints related to these apps have been registered in Thiruvananthapuram Rural alone. In Raj's case, parallel investigations are also probing allegations of caste-based discrimination at his college and the National Commission for Scheduled Castes has sought a report from the State police in under a week. Once installed, these apps extract contact lists, photo galleries, and GPS data from the user's device and export them to servers often located in North India or overseas. If repayment is delayed, recovery agents steadily ramp up harassment, including repeated abusive calls to the borrower, harassing persons listed as references on the loan application, and inflicting reputational damage. Kerala in particular has high smartphone penetration and digital literacy, but not necessarily financial literacy, and a large student population with urgent small-credit needs. Despite the RBI's Digital Lending Guidelines, predatory apps lend without regulated status, fabricate Non-Banking Financial Company (NBFC) partnerships, route funds through opaque gateways, conceal fees and disbursement deductions, and provide no grievance mechanism.

The apps are able to operate because while the RBI regulates financial entities, the harmful entity operates in the app and data layers. As a first step, smartphone makers must consider an OS-level sandbox in which any app categorised as "financial" is technically barred from accessing contacts, photos, etc., even if the user grants permission. The apps' call centres are also often traced to other States or countries, beyond the reach of local police. Second, India needs to enact legislation with prison sentences and heavy fines for illegal digital lending. When an app is removed from a store or directory, its developers relaunch immediately under new names. Third, the government can mandate all financial apps to have a cryptographically signed certificate of association from a regulated bank or NBFC and app stores to check listings against a Reserve Bank of India whitelist. This is also why the Kerala government is mulling new legislation to regulate digital lending platforms and empower local police to act against apps operating from outside the State. Fourth, the country needs rigorous disclosure standards on effective interest rates and fees, strict rules on recovery conduct, stricter KYC (Know your Customer) obligations on payment aggregators, and risk flags on UPI IDs associated with lending operations associated with a high complaint rate.



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GS Paper II – Polity

Placing women at the core of democracy

For decades, the need for making women agents of empowerment rather than just recipients of welfare has been acknowledged and discussed by various governments. But the credit for bringing on board all dissenting and delaying voices goes to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who, by passing the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam (or Women's Reservation Act) 2023 has established a milestone in India's constitutional trajectory. The legislation guarantees 33% reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and the State Legislatures, but its significance goes far beyond the appeals of representation, equality, and inclusion. The lenses of institutional design, epistemic diversity, and developmental rationality establish this Act as a remarkable structural innovation in Indian democracy, which will go a long way in reaffirming that the reform is aimed not merely at reservation but also at the very intelligence and resilience of our constitutional order.

There is no doubt that the Adhiniyam will function as a mechanism that deepens democracy. There will be an expansion of the social and perceptive base from which democracy draws political authority, thus further strengthening representative democracy. It will also broaden the state's decision-making intelligence by incorporating previously overlooked and ignored standpoints. Recruitment in Indian politics has been confined by politics of dynasty, caste, and networked masculinities. The Act has the potential to break this ecosystem and will force political parties to reorganise their structures and shift their focus from 'just getting elected' to 'searching and nurturing the talent that can be elected'. The increased numbers of women in legislatures will broaden the horizons of legislative debate in content, tone, and ethical range.



Vandana Mishra

Professor, Centre for Political Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University

The first challenge to implementing the law is institutional as it is chained to the timely completion of the Census and the delimitation

Governance will become more effective when deliberations are informed by multiple experiences. Women legislators, drawing upon their distinctively lived social realities, are likely to articulate different conceptions of justice, liberty, and fairness. Domestic violence, childcare infrastructure, public sanitation, and access to public services will no longer be peripheral or 'soft issues' as they will be reasoned differently. This can be rightly understood as a shift from procedural democracy, where the focus is on structures, institutions, and processes, to deliberative democracy, where the focus is on collecting competing arguments and the quality of the process rather than its outcome.

This law also finds reasonable justification in the grammar of political economy. It ensures that policy making is informed by real lives rather than statistics alone. Over the decades, women have made their mark in India's informal economy. From agricultural labourers, self-help group leaders, and teachers to street vending and domestic work, women constitute the unacknowledged and hence uncounted macroeconomics of survival. When this dispersed expertise translates to formal decision making and policy formulation, it allows different stake-holders – political parties and the state – to listen to an entirely different set of micro-rationalities. The public policy discourse has already established that when decisions are made by those in the first line of consequence bearing, the feedback loop between the government and the citizenry shortens and becomes more effective.

Administrative readiness

However, guaranteeing the Act's transformative potential will be a difficult nut to crack. It will largely depend on how well the

ecosystem of politics, party organisation, and public discourse adapts to it. The centuries-old habits of thought, social hierarchies, inhibitions, and material constraints may resist or distort its content, thus delaying the democratic renewal. The first challenge is institutional as the Adhiniyam is chained to the timely completion of the Census and the delimitation of constituencies. It needs administrative readiness to translate the Act into action. Secondly, genuine reform would require redesigning internal political party structures so that women can be recruited at all operating levels. It calls for a realistic acceptance of them as co-political actors and not figurative placeholders. Parties also have to ensure that the voices not yet heard - of the marginalised



as well as of the mainstreamed - do not remain excluded in practice. The challenge here is to not be consumed by the already existing and overtly active elitist political oligarchies. Thirdly, affective restructuring will be required because the institutions, which

habitually display performative aggression, may instinctively look through the ideas of empathy and social reasoning. Fourthly, women themselves have to stand up to the constraints of social norms and gender roles which still limit their mobility, time, and autonomy. Fifthly, the Indian society must rise to the need of the hour. This entails a thorough reconfiguration of social attitudes to confer women the space, dignity, and respect essential for profound and autonomous engagement in public life.

The reform should be seen as a long process of political refinement wherein we must develop the habit of recognising, listening, and accommodating different perspectives as it will lead to intelligent policy making and deepening of democracy.

GS Paper II – Polity

How proposed delimitation would redraw political map

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

DATA POINT

Srinivasan Ramani
Sambavi Parthasarathy

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.

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.

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

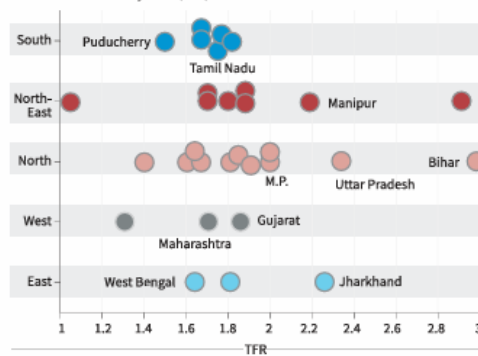


TABLE 2: Region-wise increase in seats, and region-wise share of seats in the current composition and as per the proposed delimitation exercise

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



GS Paper II – International Relations

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

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

Smruti Sudesh

The story so far:

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.

THE GIST

▼ The Strait of Hormuz is a narrow stretch through which about one-fifth of global oil and large volumes of LNG pass daily, making it central to global energy flows and trade.

▼ Blockades or threats can sharply reduce shipping, push up energy prices, disrupt supply chains.



Learn Beyond

GS Paper II – Polity

‘Uniform Civil Code will erase tribal identity; won’t accept it’

West Bengal Forests Minister, who is contesting from Binpur, says ‘tribals have our own systems, traditions, and cultures’; says development of small-scale industries could be helpful in State

INTERVIEW

Birbaha Hansda

Shrabana Chatterjee



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West Bengal Minister for Forests, Self Help Groups and Self Employment Birbaha Hansda, who is contesting the Assembly polls from Binpur, says the proposed Uniform Civil Code threatens tribal traditions and autonomy. She speaks about representation, job scarcity, forest-based livelihoods, and why she believes small-scale industries and local knowledge must drive employment. Edited excerpts:

The BJP has said it will implement the UCC within six months if voted to power. As a tribal leader, how do you view this?

We the tribals have our own systems, traditions, and cultures. Our practices are the gift of our forefathers, and it is our way of keeping our history alive through our everyday lives. But the BJP is trying to force us into giving up our traditions with the

UCC implementation. We will not accept this.

Much of our worship and everyday life is rooted in nature, because that is part of our identity. They want to snatch away our individuality. We are strongly opposing this forced imposition.

Has your presence improved the representation of the marginalised, or is it tokenism?

There has definitely been some improvement. Whenever I speak with the Chief Minister, I raise demands of tribals, such as recognition of our religious code. She tries to understand these issues with me for better policy decisions. When I spoke about the issue of fake Scheduled Tribe certificates, I mentioned the gaps in the information reaching her. Af-

ter that, she instructed officials to look into it carefully.

Since you are contesting from Binpur, what promises do you have for your voters?

I don't go around saying "I will do this" or "I will do that." My work depends on the needs of the people. I can never, on my own, promise that I will do something specific. Because I have to engage with the people of that area, understand their priorities, and act accordingly.

How do you respond to concerns over job scarcity in West Bengal, with the Opposition promising more jobs and industrial growth?

Job scarcity exists at both the State and the Central levels. In West Bengal, the development of small-scale industries could be helpful because larger industries do not always employ local people, as they often bring workers from outside. Therefore, instead of only focusing on big industries, it is better that we also think about smaller, local-level employment opportunities for widespread employment.

The BJP has also fielded SC/ST candidates. How do you differentiate yourself?

People in the villages here still see me as a neighbourhood woman. I have not changed my humble lifestyle just because I am a Minister.

What is your view on the human-elephant crisis in Jhargram?

With plantations and constructions coming up in the forest, the natural habitat gets disturbed, and it scares elephants. So, if people in these areas become a little more aware, the situation can improve.

What are the key demands you are hearing from people?

The biggest demand is housing. Currently, the Union government has stopped the housing scheme, and for poor people, having a roof over their heads is their primary need; they do not ask for much beyond that.

We are reassuring people that even though the Centre has stopped funding, the State government will provide money for housing.