



Learn Beyond

Constitution Amendment Bill, part of delimitation package, defeated

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

Sobhana K. Nair
Sreeparna Chakrabarty
NEW DELHI

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

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

Opposition joins hands

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

Category	Number of MPs	Share
In favour	298	56.4%
Against	230	43.6%
Abstentions	0	0%
Total present and voting	528	100%
Required (2/3+ 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. #11

ment Bill to pass.

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

The government extended the Budget Session after

a short interlude for deliberating on these Bills.

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

one vote and one value".

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

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, in a post

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.

CONTINUED ON
» PAGE 10

EDITORIAL
» PAGE 8

RELATED REPORTS ON
» PAGES 4, 10 & 11



Learn Beyond

KPR IAS Academy

Institute for IAS, IPS, IFS and TNPSC Exams

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

GS Paper II – Polity

Why women's reservation cannot wait any longer

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

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

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

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

Structural faults

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



Shamika Ravi
Member, EAC-PM

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

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

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

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

On State legislatures and Parliament

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

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

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

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

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

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

Deepening democracy

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

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

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

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

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



Learn Beyond

KPR IAS Academy

Institute for IAS, IPS, IFS and TNPSC Exams

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

GS Paper II – Polity

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

Krishnadas Rajagopal
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Friday 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 can-



not 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.

The Supreme Court would resume the hearing on April 21.



Learn Beyond

KPR IAS Academy

Institute for IAS, IPS, IFS and TNPSC Exams

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

GS Paper II – Polity

A violation of 'one person, one vote, one value': Shah

Home Minister points to the vast disparities in the number of people represented by MPs; he says 'north-south divide' narrative is detrimental to India and it will not diminish popularity of govt.

Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday said the principle of "one person, one vote, one value" was being violated, pointing out that while some MPs represented 48 lakh people, the others represented barely six lakh.

Mr. Shah said the "north-south divide" narrative being engineered was detrimental to the country, and that the people of Lakshadweep had as much right on Parliament as those from Bihar or Uttar Pradesh. He said the narrative was not going to diminish the popularity of the government and even if the Opposition "greyed their hair", they would not be able to occupy the Treasury benches.

A Constitutional Amendment Bill that sought to implement 33% reservation for women in Parliament and Assembly constituencies through delimitation was defeated in the Lok Sabha, as it could not get two-thirds of votes from members present in the House. According to available figures, out of 528 MPs present, 298 voted in favour and 230 against the Bill.

"From 1971, there is a freeze on the increase of Lok Sabha seats. Malkajgir in Telangana has 48 lakh voters, Bengaluru North has 29 lakh, Ghaziabad, represented by Defence Mi-



Home Minister Amit Shah pointed out that while some MPs represent 48 lakh people, others represent barely six lakh. ANI

nister Rajnath Singh once, has 28 lakh voters, North-west Delhi 27 lakh voters. There are 127 seats where there are more than 20 lakh voters. How can one MP fulfil the aspirations of 48 lakh people? One person, one vote, one value is being violated, somewhere it is 48 lakh and somewhere it is six lakh. There is no value for one person, one vote. If they (Opposition) support the delimitation, then each vote will have the same value," Mr. Shah said.

Responding to Samajwadi Party MP Akhilesh Yadav, who intervened to say that the figure for Ghaziabad was much more, the Home Minister said that the member did not know if he was speaking in favour of the Delimitation Bill, 2026, or against it, and that was the precise point he intended to make.

Mr. Shah said that in 1976, the population of the

country was 54.89 crore and today it is 140 crore. "They (Opposition) want the number of MPs then and now to remain the same," he said.

The Minister said the Delimitation Commission would have required public hearings in all the 543 constituencies and it could not have been completed by 2029, affecting the implementation of the women's reservation Act by the 2029 general election. "If the women's reservation Act is to be implemented, then the delimitation will have to be done now, that is why the Bill is being brought now," he said.

He said Tamil Nadu had 39 Lok Sabha seats and if the women's quota was applied, 13 seats would be reserved for women and 26 seats would be in the open category. "If the delimitation was done according to 2011 Census, then the State

would lose six seats. That is why we are increasing 50% seats in all States, so that the pro-rata distribution is not affected. Now, 20 seats will be added, taking the total number to 59 and those reserved for women will be 20," he said.

Caste count

The Minister said that the decennial Census was delayed due to COVID-19 pandemic, and in 2024, when the process started, several parties demanded that caste should also be enumerated.

"We decided in 2025 that caste enumeration will be done. The column for caste will be there when population enumeration (second phase) is done. Caste is not enumerated during the household Census (first phase), which is ongoing. They are not interested in caste count, they want to tie us in knots," he said.

Refuting the claims of the Opposition that the Bill was brought to negate the caste Census, Mr. Shah said the process started three months ago and the first phase of Population Census 2027 was going on.

"I thought they wouldn't oppose the reservation for mothers... The Bill has provision to count the latest published Census. I can bring an amendment in one-hour... They are opposing the Bill because it will enhance the PM's goodwill among the women....," he said.