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1. A Constitutional Amendment Bill seeking to increase the number of Lok Sabha constituencies from 543 to 850 is set to be introduced in Parliament on Thursday (April 16).

(i) This draft bill was released for the perusal of Lok Sabha members on Tuesday.

(ii) A Constitutional amendment bill aimed at implementing the 106th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2023 (Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam)—which provides for a 33 percent reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies—is scheduled to be introduced during the Parliamentary session taking place from April 16 to April 18. At that time, the number of Lok Sabha constituencies is to be increased to 850, with 280 of these constituencies being reserved for women.

(iii) Amendment to Article 81:

- The Central Government has decided to amend Article 81 of the Constitution with the objective of implementing the law providing for a 33 percent reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies by the year 2029, based on data from the 2011 Census.

(iv) 815 Seats for States, 35 for Union Territories:

- According to this amendment bill, a maximum of 815 members are to be elected from Lok Sabha constituencies within the States, while 35 members are to be elected from the Union Territories.
- In addition to this, the Central Government also plans to introduce a Delimitation Bill—aimed at redrawing constituency boundaries based on the 2011 Census—as well as bills to facilitate a 33 percent reservation for women in the three Union Territories that possess legislative assemblies: Delhi, Jammu & Kashmir, and Puducherry.

(v) On a Rotational Basis...

- It has been indicated that constituencies reserved for women in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies will be allocated on a rotational basis.
- It was widely speculated that the Central Government might propose increasing the number of Lok Sabha constituencies in all states by 50 percent. However, the Bill contains no provisions regarding this matter.
- The Constitutional Amendment Bill aims to modify the constitutional framework concerning the delimitation of constituencies, the reservation of seats, and the definition of "population." Accordingly, the Bill facilitates the modification of this constitutional framework by enabling the Delimitation Commission to undertake the tasks related to constituency delimitation and seat reservation based on the population census.

(vi) Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin has issued a warning stating that the DMK will spearhead a massive protest if the state of Tamil Nadu is adversely affected by the process of constituency delimitation.

2. In Chhattisgarh, 13 employees lost their lives following a boiler pipe explosion at a thermal power plant owned by a private company. 21 people sustained severe injuries.

(i) A thermal power plant belonging to the Vedanta Group operates in Singitarai village, located in the Sakti district of Chhattisgarh. On Tuesday, while work was in progress at the facility, a boiler pipe suddenly burst around 2:00 PM. 13 workers were caught in the blast and lost their lives.

3. U.S. President Donald Trump stated that the second phase of peace talks between the United States and Iran is likely to resume within the next two days in Islamabad, the capital of Pakistan.

4. Through a resounding victory in recent by-elections held in Canada, the Liberal Party—led by Prime Minister Mark Carney—has secured an absolute majority in the country's Parliament.

(i) In the by-elections held for three constituencies—University-Rosedale and Scarborough Centre in the province of Ontario, and Terrebonne in the province of Quebec—the Liberal Party emerged victorious in all three.

(ii) As a result of this victory, the Liberal Party's strength in the country's 343-Member Parliament has risen to 174. The fact that five Members of Parliament from opposition parties joined the Liberal Party over the past few months served as a key factor contributing to this majority. This marks the first time since the tenure of former Prime Minister Justin Trudeau that a single party holds power in Canada with an absolute majority. Consequently, the Liberal Party is now poised to remain in power until the year 2029.

(iii) Political observers attribute this victory to the public's confidence in Mark Carney's economic management. In particular, the stance he adopted against the economic dominance of the United States received widespread acclaim among the Canadian people.

(iv) However, Opposition Leader Pierre Poilievre has criticized the outcome, asserting that this victory was made possible solely through behind-the-scenes political deals.

5. One97 Communications, the company managing the brand 'Paytm'—a prominent financial technology firm—has now emerged as an entity with a majority of Indian ownership.

(i) According to statistics released at the end of last month, the stake held by domestic investors in the company has risen to 50.3 percent.

(ii) Over the past few quarters, the confidence of domestic investors in Paytm has been steadily increasing.

6. India's imports of crude oil from Russia tripled last March, rising to Rs.58,200 crore (5.3 billion Euros). A report released by a European research firm regarding this matter states the following:

- As of March 2026, India ranks second on the list of countries importing the largest volumes of Russian fuels. China holds the first position.
- Overall, during the month of March, India imported hydrocarbon products worth Rs.64,000 crore (5.8 billion Euros) from Russia. Within this total, crude oil imports tripled, surging to Rs.58,200 crore. Following crude oil, coal and other petroleum products were the next largest categories of imports.
- In the preceding month of February, India emerged as the third-largest importer of Russian hydrocarbon products (valued at Rs.19,700 crore). At that time, crude oil accounted for 81 percent of these imports.
- It was reported that while India's overall crude oil imports declined by 4 percent in March, imports specifically from Russia doubled during the same period.
- Previously, the United States had increased tariffs on countries importing crude oil from Russia. Consequently, India began to gradually reduce its imports of Russian crude oil. Amidst this situation, the United States and Israel jointly launched an attack on Iran last February. In retaliation, Iran closed the Strait of Hormuz, thereby disrupting the global supply of crude oil.

- Notably, to mitigate this disruption, the United States granted a one-month tariff exemption to countries importing crude oil from Russia.

7. Informed sources have stated that, as fuel prices in India remain unchanged, oil companies are incurring losses of up to Rs.18 per litre on petrol and Rs.35 per litre on diesel. Elaborating on this matter, these sources further noted:

- A conflict involving Iran, the United States, and Israel has been ongoing since February 28. Consequently, difficulties persist regarding the passage of cargo vessels transporting crude oil through the Strait of Hormuz. As a result, the price of a barrel of crude oil has risen to 100 US dollars over the past 45 days. Globally, various nations are increasing their petrol and diesel prices.
- However, in India, the prices of petrol and diesel have remained unchanged since August 2022.
- Even amidst the continuing geopolitical tensions in West Asia, the Indian Oil Corporation (IOC), Bharat Petroleum Corporation (BPCL), and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation (HPCL)—the entities responsible for determining petrol and diesel prices—have not raised their rates.
- Consequently, during the previous month, these three companies incurred daily losses amounting to approximately Rs.2,400 crore. Subsequently, following the Central Government's decision to reduce the excise duty on petrol and diesel by Rs.10 per litre, the combined daily loss for the aforementioned three companies decreased to Rs.1,600 crore.
- "Nevertheless," the sources stated, "because fuel prices are being kept constant to shield consumers from adverse effects, the oil companies—IOC, BPCL, and HPCL—continue to face losses of up to Rs.18 per litre on petrol and Rs.35 per litre on diesel."

8. A report released by the United Nations states that tensions in West Asia pose a risk of pushing 2.5 million people in India into poverty. The report, titled 'War Tensions in the Middle East: Impact on Human Development in Asia and the Pacific'—published by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)—notes the following:

(i) The impact of the ongoing conflict in the Middle East has extended to the Asia and Pacific region.

(ii) Due to various pressures—including rising fuel prices and increased food insecurity—people's purchasing power has diminished significantly, thereby affecting their livelihoods.

(iii) Consequently, there is a risk that 8.8 million people globally could be pushed into poverty. In India, between 4,00,000 and 2.5 million people are likely to be affected. In China, between 1,15,000 and 6,20,000 people are likely to be pushed into poverty.

(iv) In India, while the number of people living below the poverty line stood at 35.1 million prior to the West Asian conflict, it is projected to rise to 35.4 million in the aftermath of the conflict.

(v) As a result, India's human development is expected to suffer a setback ranging from 0.03 to 0.12 years. India imports 90 percent of the crude oil required for its domestic needs; of this, 40 percent—along with 90 percent of its cooking gas requirements—is imported from West Asia.

(vi) The report further indicates that, as a ripple effect of this situation, the prices of essential commodities are likely to rise; moreover, sectors such as tourism, food processing, and steel manufacturing could be adversely affected, potentially leading to increased unemployment.

9. Target 2029: Is the Modi Government showing Speed or Strategy?" (இலக்கு 2029: மோடி அரசு காட்டுவது வேகமா? விவேகமா?)

Analysis of the sudden legislative push to increase Parliamentary seats and implement women's reservation.

(i) Context and Overview

- The Central Government has scheduled a special three-day Parliamentary session from April 16 to 18, 2026, to introduce three critical amendment bills. The primary objective is to finalize the framework for the 2029 General Elections, aiming to implement the 33% women's reservation mandated by the 106th Constitutional Amendment (Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam) through a revised delimitation process.

(ii) Important Features of the Bill: -

- Expansion of Lok Sabha: The total number of Lok Sabha seats is proposed to increase from 543 to 850.
- Seat Distribution: Out of the 850 seats, approximately 815 will be allocated to States and 35 to Union Territories.
- Women's Reservation: 280 seats in the Lok Sabha will be reserved for women under the 33% quota.
- Delimitation Basis: The delimitation of constituencies will be based on 2011 Census data, rather than waiting for the 2026 census results.
- Constitutional Amendment: A specific amendment to Article 81 is proposed to facilitate this expansion.
- Rotation System: The reserved seats for women in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies will be allocated on a rotation basis.
- SC/ST Provisions: The number of seats reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes will also increase proportionately, with one-third of those reserved for women within those categories.

(iii) Views of Political Parties

1. BJP (Central Government)

- Empowerment Strategy: Prime Minister Modi characterizes this as a historic step for "Nari Shakti" (Women's Power), asserting that any further delay would be an injustice to the women of India.
- Seat Increase: Former TN BJP President K. Annamalai argued that delimitation would not reduce seats for the South; rather, he projected that Tamil Nadu's seats would increase from 39 to 59.

2. DMK

- Punishment for Success: Chief Minister M.K. Stalin warned of a massive protest, stating that the South is being "punished" for successfully implementing population control and family planning.
- Erosion of Rights: He characterized the move as a "murder of state rights" and a threat to democracy, alleging that the bill's details are being hidden from the public to mask a greater danger.

3. Congress

- Northern Dominance: TNCC President Selvaperunthagai claimed that delimitation would cause South India's representation to drop from 23.74% to 18.97%.
- Hindi Heartland Shift: He projected that while South Indian states like Andhra Pradesh might see seat reductions (e.g., 42 to 34), Northern states like Uttar Pradesh would surge from 80 to 91 seats,

and the total seats for Hindi-speaking states could rise from 63 to 143.

4. CPI(M)

- Political Tool: The party supports the 33% reservation but opposes linking it with delimitation, calling the Government's stance a "political shield" to use women's rights as an excuse for redistricting.

IV. Analysis of Consequences

- Geopolitical Imbalance: The most significant consequence is the potential suppression of the South's voice in Parliament. If seats are allocated strictly by population (2011 census), states that controlled their population will have less legislative power compared to those that did not.
- Administrative Challenges: Increasing the number of MPs to 850 will lead to longer debates and administrative complexity within the new Parliament building.
- Constitutional Crisis: Since 1971, the number of seats was frozen to protect states following family planning. Breaking this freeze based on population data may create a permanent political divide between the North and South.
- Federalism at Risk: Opposition parties argue that this move weakens the "One Nation, Great Bharat" spirit by creating a system where a few large Northern states can unilaterally pass constitutional amendments.

10. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has projected that India's economic growth will stand at 6.5 percent in the current fiscal year (2026-27).

(i) In its 'World Economic Outlook' report released in this regard, the IMF noted: "The strong fiscal performance witnessed in 2025—along with the reduction of additional tariffs imposed by the U.S. on Indian goods from 50 percent to 10 percent—has offset the adverse impact stemming from the conflict in the Middle East. Consequently, India's economic growth is projected to be 6.5 percent in 2026. This growth rate is expected to be sustained at 6.5 percent in 2027."

(ii) The report further states that, given the projection that the conflict in West Asia is likely to be short-lived, global economic growth is expected to experience a moderate slowdown.

11. Analysis of the Delhi Government's aggressive push toward a green energy transition to combat severe air pollution and reduce dependency on fossil fuels.

(i) Core Objectives and Context

- Environmental Crisis: The policy is driven by the need to address catastrophic air pollution in the national capital, which becomes particularly lethal during the winter months.
- Geopolitical Necessity: The current West Asian war has created a global mandate to shift away from fossil fuels, making Delhi's transition a timely strategic move.
- Policy Framework: The Delhi Government has drafted a comprehensive Electric Vehicle (EV) Policy for 2026–2030 to achieve these goals.

(ii) Steps Taken by the Delhi Government (2026–2030)

- Registration Bans and Phase-Outs
- Auto-Rickshaws: Starting next year (2027), the registration of new petrol-powered autos will be completely cancelled.

- Two-Wheelers: From April 2028, the registration of petrol-powered bikes and scooters will be halted, allowing only electric variants.
- Target: The Government aims to phase out all petrol and diesel vehicles by 2028.
- Public and Institutional Shifts: By 2030, all school buses must be converted to electric, and all future Government vehicle procurements will be 100% electric.
- Financial Incentives and Subsidies
- Two-Wheelers: An incentive of ₹10,000 per kW is offered, providing up to ₹30,000 in the first year of the policy.
- Commercial Vehicles: Electric autos will receive a ₹50,000 incentive, while electric freight (cargo) vehicles will receive ₹1 lakh in the first year.
- These incentives are designed to be highest in the first year and will be gradually reduced over the following three years.

(iii) Scrappage Policy Incentives

- BS-4 Vehicles: Owners switching to EVs can receive a "scrap incentive" of ₹10,000 for old two-wheelers and ₹25,000 for old autos.
- Cars: For petrol cars valued up to ₹30 lakh, a ₹1 lakh incentive is provided for switching to electric, while freight vehicles receive ₹50,000.

(iv) Tax and Fee Exemptions

- Registration & Road Tax: The Government has announced a 100% exemption on road tax and registration fees for electric vehicles.
- Value Cap: This 100% exemption applies to electric cars valued up to ₹30 lakh. EVs exceeding this price point receive no concessions.
- Hybrid Vehicles: Petrol / diesel hybrid vehicles are eligible for a 50% exemption.

(v) Infrastructure and Employment

- Charging Stations: The Government is prioritizing the establishment of a city-wide network of charging centres (Charging Stations).
- Battery Management: To handle old batteries, the policy promotes the creation of battery recycling and storage centres.
- Economic Benefit: The Government anticipates that the widespread installation of charging infrastructure will create significant new job opportunities.

While previous shifts to CNG and electric public transport reduced smoke levels, the rising population and vehicle count necessitated a total shift away from petrol and diesel. It characterizes this draft policy as a model for other Indian state capitals and municipal corporations to follow in the transition to sustainable urban mobility.