

April 16, 2026 – Dinamani Newspaper – Tit bits

1. As an extension of the ongoing Budget Session of Parliament, a special session is scheduled to be held for three days, commencing on Thursday (April 16).

(i) This session is being convened with the objective of introducing, debating, and passing three bills—including the 131st Constitutional Amendment Bill—which seek to implement a 33 percent reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies starting from the year 2029, and to facilitate this by increasing the total number of Lok Sabha constituencies from 543 to 850.

(ii) Against the backdrop of the women's reservation issue, opposition parties have registered strong objections to the constituency delimitation measures proposed by the Central Government. In particular, vehement opposition has arisen over concerns that the representation of southern states—which have been successful in effectively controlling their population growth—could potentially diminish.

(iii) Amidst this charged atmosphere, the special Parliamentary session has generated significant anticipation.

(iv) The legislation providing for a 33 percent reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies was enacted in 2023. According to this Act, the reservation for women can only be implemented following a constituency delimitation exercise conducted subsequent to a new population census. Specifically, since the implementation of women's reservation is contingent upon the completion of the delimitation process based on the 2027 census, the situation previously suggested that implementation would not be possible before 2034.

(v) Central Government's Determination:

- In light of this situation, the Central Government—having resolved to implement the women's reservation from the 2029 general elections onwards—is demonstrating a strong resolve to introduce and pass the relevant Constitutional Amendment Bill and other associated bills during this session.
- According to the draft Constitutional Amendment Bill released by the Central Government, it is proposed to increase the number of Lok Sabha constituencies from 543 to a maximum of 850 (with a cap of 815 seats for States and 35 for Union Territories) to facilitate the implementation of women's reservation; a corresponding increase in the number of seats in State Legislative Assemblies has also been proposed.
- A key feature of the Bill is the amendment to Article 81 of the Constitution, which governs the determination of the number of Lok Sabha seats in the country.
- The Bill also incorporates provisions stating that population census data from the last delimitation exercise (2011) will be utilized for constituency realignment, and that constituencies for women will be allocated on a rotational basis.
- "The Delimitation Commission itself will determine the final number of constituencies; 850 represents only the maximum limit. Constituencies will be allocated based on the principle of proportional representation," sources within the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) stated.

(vi) What are the Bills?

- Three Bills have been listed for introduction in the Lok Sabha: the 131st Constitutional Amendment Bill, 2026—designed to facilitate the speedy implementation of women's reservation; the

Delimitation Bill, 2026; and the Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026—which paves the way for implementing these laws in Union Territories that possess a Legislative Assembly.

- The first two Bills will be introduced by the Union Law Minister, Arjun Ram Meghwal, while the third Bill will be introduced by Amit Shah. As 18 hours have been allotted for debate, the proceedings are likely to continue until Friday. A Government press release states that once the Bills are passed in the Lok Sabha, they will be taken up for consideration in the Rajya Sabha.

vii) Requirement for a Special Majority:

- While a simple majority suffices for the passage of other bills, a special majority in both Houses is mandatory for the enactment of a Constitutional Amendment Bill. Specifically, the bill requires the affirmative votes of more than 50 percent of the total membership of the House; furthermore, the bill can be passed only if it secures the votes of two-thirds of the members present and voting in the House.
- In the Lok Sabha, the ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA) holds 292 seats, while the opposition parties collectively hold 233 seats. Reports suggest that informal negotiations are currently underway on the Government's behalf to garner the support of the opposition parties for the bill.

2. Chinese President Xi Jinping has emphasized that "China and Russia must work together to restore the authority and credibility of the United Nations."

(i) Citing the potential war against Iran and the regime change efforts in Venezuela, President Xi Jinping urged both nations to intensify their cooperation in countering the aggressive actions of U.S. President Donald Trump.

(ii) President Xi Jinping made these remarks during a meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, who is currently on a visit to China.

(iii) During the meeting, he further stated the following:

- It is the imperative of the hour to curb the unilateralist tendencies of the United States and to restore the authority and credibility of the United Nations.
- It is essential to establish a fair and balanced international order. In this regard, he asserted that China and Russia must coordinate their efforts within forums such as BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).
- Sergey Lavrov stated that Russia stands ready to assist in addressing the global shortage of crude oil caused by the disruption in the Strait of Hormuz. He further gave assurances that Russia is capable of ensuring an uninterrupted supply of fuel to China and other nations via pipelines.
- It is anticipated that Russia and China will undertake key initiatives at the upcoming BRICS Summit—scheduled to be held in India later this year—to safeguard the interests of developing nations and to strengthen multilateralism.

3. The country's sugar production has risen by 7.70 percent so far during the current 2025-26 sugar season (October–September), reaching 2.74 crore tonnes.

(i) It is noteworthy that during the corresponding period of the previous year, sugar production stood at 2.54 crore tonnes.



(ii) A report by the National Federation of Cooperative Sugar Factories states that out of the total 541 sugar mills engaged in sugarcane crushing across the country, crushing operations are currently continuing in only 21 mills.

(iii) This is because the production achieved so far in the current season has already surpassed the total production of the entire 2024–25 season, which stood at 2.62 crore tonnes. The increase in sugarcane crushing and sugar production in the states of Maharashtra and Karnataka is cited as the primary reason for this.

(iv) In Maharashtra—the country's leading sugar producer—sugar production alone has risen by 23 percent, reaching 99.2 lakh tonnes. This figure stood at 80.6 lakh tonnes last year.

(v) Similarly, in Karnataka—the third-largest producer—production has increased by 16.70 percent, reaching 47.1 lakh tonnes. However, in Uttar Pradesh—which holds the second position—sugar production has declined by approximately 2 percent, dropping to 89.2 lakh tonnes. During this season, the sugar recovery rate—the quantity of sugar produced from sugarcane—has risen from 9.37 percent last year to 9.55 percent.

4. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has warned that the conflict in the Middle East will dampen global economic growth and fuel inflation. In this regard, the IMF report further states the following:

(i) Last January, global economic growth for the year 2026 was projected to stand at 3.3 percent. It is now estimated that this figure will decline to 3.1 percent.

(ii) The conflict in the Middle East is a primary contributor to this trend. Should the situation there fail to improve—or worsen further—there is a possibility that the adverse economic impact on a global scale could intensify.

(iii) Global inflation was previously projected to be 3.8 percent. It is now anticipated to rise to as high as 4.4 percent. This is because rising crude oil prices are expected to trigger price hikes for various commodities across all nations.

(iv) Conversely, technological advancements—specifically the substantial increase in investments within sectors such as data centers and Artificial Intelligence (AI)—are expected to boost productivity within these fields. It is noted that this, in turn, will serve to strengthen the global economy.

(v) Comprising 191 member nations, the IMF operates with the objective of fostering global economic growth, ensuring financial stability, and working toward the reduction of poverty worldwide.

5. World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) President Witold Bańka met with Union Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya for discussions. While consulting with the Minister regarding the effective implementation of anti-doping measures on par with global standards, Bańka also held talks with Manoj Sasidhar, Special Director of the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), and officials from the National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA).

6. India's R. Vaishali emerged as the champion in the Women's section of the Candidates Chess Tournament. With this victory, she has qualified as the challenger to face the reigning champion, Ju Wenjun of China, for the World Women's Chess Championship title.

7. Danish badminton player Viktor Axelsen (32)—a two-time World Champion and two-time Olympic

Champion—announced his retirement.

(i) It is noteworthy that Viktor Axelsen claimed the championship titles at the 2017 and 2022 World Championships, as well as at the 2021 Tokyo and 2024 Paris Olympic Games. In addition to winning the European Championship title three times, he held the World No. 1 ranking for a continuous period of 183 weeks.

8. India has stated that new nations must be inducted as permanent members with 'Veto' power in the UN Security Council; otherwise, any reform would be futile.

(i) The UN Security Council is regarded as the most powerful body within the United Nations. It comprises five nations—the United States, Russia, Britain, France, and China—serving as permanent members endowed with 'Veto' power, alongside ten other nations serving as non-permanent members without 'Veto' power.

(ii) Nations including India, Germany, Japan, and Brazil have long been advocating for reforms within this Council, specifically demanding their own inclusion as permanent members.

(iii) Speaking at a consultative meeting held in New York regarding these reforms, India's Ambassador to the UN, Parvathaneni Harish, stated the following:

- Debating whether or not to grant 'Veto' power to new nations inducted as members of the UN Security Council would complicate the negotiations that have already taken place. There is a broad consensus that reforming the UN Security Council is an absolute necessity.
- This structure was established 80 years ago, at the time of the United Nations' inception. This framework is incapable of meeting contemporary geopolitical requirements.
- Since the establishment of the UN, the Security Council has undergone reform only once—in 1960. At that time, the Council consisted of five permanent members and six non-permanent members; during that reform, the number of non-permanent members was increased to ten. He stated that when reforms are undertaken within the UN Security Council, 'veto' power should be granted to the nations newly admitted as permanent members.

9. Indian Delegation to Visit the U.S. Next Week for Trade Agreement Talks

(i) Last February, India and the United States finalized the action plan for the first phase of a bilateral trade agreement between the two nations. Under this action plan, the U.S. agreed to reduce tariffs on Indian goods to 18 percent. Speaking to reporters on Wednesday regarding this agreement, Union Commerce Secretary Rajesh Agarwal stated the following:

- An Indian delegation is scheduled to visit the United States on April 20 to hold negotiations concerning the trade agreement. This meeting marks the first time in three to four months that delegations from both countries are meeting in person to discuss the pact. Both sides are actively striving to legally finalize the trade agreement.
- He further noted that the meeting would also include discussions regarding an investigation initiated by the U.S. under Section 301 of its Trade Act of 1974. This investigation aims to assess the adverse impact on American manufacturing resulting from the trade practices of various nations, including India and Japan.

10. Analysis of the dual threats of air and water pollution, drawing from recent Parliamentary reports and

International studies.

(i) Water Pollution: Indian State-Wise Analysis –

A report by the Parliamentary Standing Committee for the Union Ministry of Jal Shakti (2026–27) regarding the catastrophic state of groundwater in India.

- Research was conducted using samples collected from 4,949 villages across the country.
- The report specifically warns that groundwater in the following eight states is heavily contaminated and unfit for consumption: Assam, Bihar, Kerala, Odisha, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tripura, and West Bengal.
- Rajasthan and Punjab are identified as the states suffering from the most extreme levels of groundwater pollution.
- Toxic Contaminants: Samples confirmed the presence of dangerous heavy metals and chemicals, including:
 - Mercury
 - Uranium
 - Selenium
 - Cadmium
 - Fluoride and Nitrate.
- The primary causes identified are the excessive extraction of groundwater, which has neutralized natural springs, and the unfiltered discharge of industrial chemical waste into rivers and streams.

(ii) Air Pollution: Global and Country-Wise Facts

Reference data taken from "IQ Air," a Swiss-based organization that monitors global air quality.

- The organization notes that countries in the Southern Hemisphere face the most severe air pollution challenges.
- Along with India, the countries with the highest levels of air pollution are:
 - Pakistan.
 - Bangladesh.
 - Kazakhstan.
 - Chad.
 - Congo.
- The Urban-Rural Divide: Small towns and villages suffer more from water pollution, while major cities and municipal corporations face the brunt of air pollution.

(iii) Chronological Analysis of the Environmental Crisis

- Past 10 Years: There has been an increased focus on purifying industrial waste before discharge, but these efforts have not been sufficient to reverse the damage to groundwater.
- Past 5 Years: Statistics show a significant increase in the levels of Fluoride and Nitrate in groundwater, ponds, and lakes during this period.
- Current Period (2026–2027): The Parliamentary Standing Committee issued its urgent warning, noting that natural underground springs are becoming "inactive" due to over-extraction.
- The 2026 Crisis: The current West Asian war has further complicated the focus on these environmental issues, as global attention is diverted.

(iv) Core Causes and Consequences

- Drivers of Air Pollution: Toxic smoke from industries, fossil-fuel-powered motor vehicles, the widespread use of electronic devices like Air Conditioners, and a lack of green spaces as the primary causes.
- Clean air and water are the two indispensable needs of human life. When these foundations are compromised, it leads to the collapse of basic health, human resources, and the economy.

II. India's current electoral system and proportional representation.

(i) Analysis of Global Party Systems

- Two-Party System: Followed by nations like the United States, where only two major parties—the Democratic Party and the Republican Party—compete for power.
- Multi-Party System: Followed by countries like India, where numerous parties contest elections. For instance, more than 30 political parties are contesting in the current Tamil Nadu Assembly elections.

(ii) Pros and Cons of the Multi-Party System

Pros:

- It allows voters to choose from a wider variety of candidates who best represent their views.
- It ensures that the diverse views of different social segments are reflected in the Government.
- It prevents the dominance of a single party and allows for shared power through Coalition Governments.
- Small parties can gain a voice and contribute to balanced decision-making.

Cons:

- It can lead to Government instability if Coalition partners disagree.
- Differences in ideology between alliance partners can cause frequent friction.
- Decision-making processes are often delayed due to the need for consensus among many parties.
- It leads to "political bargaining" where parties may sacrifice their core principles to maintain an alliance.

(iii) Critique of the Current "First-Past-The-Post" (FPTP) System

Fundamental flaw in the current voting method used in India, where the candidate with the highest number of votes wins regardless of whether they have a majority:

- A candidate can be declared the winner without securing a majority (over 50%) of the total votes cast.
- Statistical Inequality: A scenario where Candidate A receives 35%, Candidate B receives 32%, and Candidate C receives 33% of the votes. Candidate A is declared the winner despite the fact that 65% of the electorate voted against them.
- Loss of Identity for Small Parties: Under the FPTP system, smaller parties are often forced to "wait at the door" of major parties for seat-sharing to ensure any legislative presence, leading to the erosion of their independent political identity.

(iv) The Proposed Alternative: Proportional Representation (PR)

A system where legislative seats are allocated based on the total percentage of votes a party receives across the state or nation:

- **Direct Correlation:** If a political party secures 40% of the total votes across all constituencies (e.g., 234 seats in Tamil Nadu), they would automatically be assigned 40% of the seats in the Assembly.
- **Symbol-Based Voting:** In this model, voters often cast their vote for a party symbol rather than an individual candidate, ensuring the legislature accurately reflects the collective will of the people.
- **Empowerment of the Marginalized:** This system allows smaller parties and marginalized groups to gain legislative entry based on their actual vote share without needing to compromise their ideologies for major-party alliances.

(v) Global Context and Recommendations

- Modern nations such as the USA, Germany, the Netherlands, and Israel have already implemented forms of proportional representation.
- Former Chief Election Commissioner J.M. Lyngdoh has officially emphasized the need for India to transition toward Proportional Representation system to improve democratic health.
- **Necessity for Diversity:** While Proportional Representation is used in nations with fewer ethnic groups, it is vital for a diverse nation like India with its many languages, religions, and cultures.

Shifting to Proportional Representation would eliminate constant disputes over seat-sharing and ensure that "every vote counts". The Election Commission and the intellectuals should be urged to initiate a serious debate on this fundamental procedural reform.