

Delimitation, and not women's reservation, is the issue

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1
Indian Polity and Governance-Constitution, Political System, Panchayati Raj, Public Policy, Rights Issues, etc.

Mains: General Studies - 2
Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

1. Context

- The Union government has called a **special session of Parliament (April 16)** during peak election campaigning in Tamil Nadu and West Bengal, raising concerns of political timing.
- The Opposition alleges the urgency is aimed at **gaining political advantage and putting them on the defensive**.
- Opposition parties have **written thrice** seeking an **all-party meeting after April 29**, but the request has been rejected.
- No **official proposal or agenda** has been shared with MPs so far.

2. Women's Reservation Issues

- The Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023 was passed unanimously in **September 2023**.
- It introduced **Article 334-A**, providing:
 - ➔ **33% reservation for women** in Lok Sabha and State Assemblies
 - ➔ Implementation **only after next Census and delimitation**
- Mallikarjun Kharge** (Leader of the Opposition in the Rajya Sabha) demanded implementation from **2024 elections**, but the government refused.
- Now the government proposes implementation from **2029**, raising questions about the **delay and policy U-turn**.

- The Act includes **reservation within reservation** (SC/ST women), but **OBC women reservation** demand remains unfulfilled.

3. Census, Caste Census and Delimitation

- The **Census of India 2021** was delayed by about **5 years**, leading to:
 - ➔ **Over 10 crore people excluded** from benefits under the National Food Security Act, 2013.
- Census 2027 is planned as a **digital Census**, with data expected by **2027**.
- Government earlier opposed caste census but later announced it → **policy inconsistency**.
- States like Bihar and Telangana completed caste surveys in **~6 months**, showing feasibility.
- Delimitation concerns include:
 - ➔ Must follow Census, but **unclear formula** is being suggested
 - ➔ Risk of **political inequity**
 - ➔ States successful in population control may **lose representation**
 - ➔ Smaller states may face **relative disadvantage**
 - ➔ Increase in Lok Sabha seats may **magnify regional disparities**

4. Democratic Concerns and Way Forward

- Government is accused of **"bulldozing" legislation** without proper debate or consultation.
- Reliance on **op-eds and public outreach** instead of institutional dialogue is criticised.
- Contrast with 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act and 74th Constitutional Amendment Act:
 - ➔ Took **almost 5 years of deliberation**
 - ➔ Led to **about 15 lakh women representatives** (over 40% in local bodies)

- Concerns that delimitation may disturb **federal balance** and penalize states with effective population control.
- Suggested approach:
 - ⊖ Hold **all-party consultation after April 29**
 - ⊖ Allow **public debate and transparency**
 - ⊖ Take up reforms in the **Monsoon Session (mid-July)**,
 - ⊖ Ensure **political equity and federal fairness**
- The real issue is **not women's reservation** but the **manner and implications of delimitation**.
- The current approach is seen as **hasty, opaque, and potentially undermining democratic and constitutional principles**.

Why India's established elite is afraid of taking risks

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1
Economic and Social Development-Sustainable Development, Poverty, Inclusion, Demographics, Social Sector Initiatives, etc.

Mains: General Studies - 3
Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment.

1. Context

- The argument draws a parallel with the novel **The Beautiful and Damned by F.Scott Fitzgerald**, where Anthony Patch has wealth, education, and connections but lacks the will to act, ultimately losing the capacity to use his inheritance meaningfully.
- A similar pattern is observed in **India's business elite**, where **second- and third-generation promoters are exiting well-performing family businesses**.
- These exits are **not due to distress**, but a **preference for liquidity over continuity**, even during a period of:
 - ⊖ Expanding domestic markets
 - ⊖ Diversifying global supply chains
 - ⊖ Abundant capital availability
- New generation elites prefer **passive investment routes (family offices, financial assets)** over running businesses.

- Contrast with first-generation entrepreneurs like **Dhirubhai Ambani**, who took irreversible, high-stakes bets.

2. Shift from Creation to Preservation (Elite Behaviour)

- Peter Turchin's (Russian-American scientist) theory of elite overproduction
 - ⊖ More qualified elites than available positions.
 - ⊖ In India, this leads not to conflict but **risk avoidance by incumbents**.
- Focus shifts from **enterprise expansion to custodianship and control of inherited wealth**.
- Outcome: Elite capacity diverted away from **high-risk, long-gestation ventures**

3. Decline in Risk-taking and R&D Investment

- Indian private sector spends **significantly less on R&D** compared to countries like China, South Korea, and Taiwan.
- Reasons:
 - ⊖ R&D requires **patient capital and uncertain outcomes**
 - ⊖ Failures are **visible and hard to justify** to shareholders
 - ⊖ Returns are **delayed and may benefit future generations**
- Safer alternatives preferred:
 - ⊖ Acquiring existing brands
 - ⊖ Real estate investments
 - ⊖ Incremental optimisation of existing businesses
- Structural shift:
 - ⊖ For inheritors, **risk is no longer opportunity but a threat to existing wealth**
 - ⊖ Rise of **passive roles** like venture capitalists or limited partners instead of active builders

4. Structural Implications and India's Dilemma

- Oswald Spengler (German polymath) highlighted societies shift from **"culture" (creative, risk-taking)** → **"civilisation" (financial, extractive)**.

- India's elite increasingly behaves like **portfolio managers, not builders**.
- Issue:
 - ➔ Not lack of entrepreneurs, but **capital-holding elites avoiding transformational risks**
- Consequences:
 - ➔ Weak R&D and innovation
 - ➔ Slower long-term economic transformation
- **Way Forward:** Incentivise long-term risk-taking through **tax benefits for R&D, corporate governance reforms, patient capital frameworks, and cultural reorientation towards entrepreneurship and nation-building**.

Between 14 years and the gallows

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1
Indian Polity and Governance-Constitution, Political System, Panchayati Raj, Public Policy, Rights Issues, etc.

Mains: General Studies - 2
Structure, organization and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary—Ministries

1. Case Background and Legal Context

- **Madurai trial court** sentenced **nine policemen to death** for the **custodial killing** of P. Jayaraj and J. Bennix (2020).
- The court applied the **"rarest of rare" doctrine** from **Bachan Singh (1980)**.
- The death penalty is allowed only when **life imprisonment is clearly inadequate**.
- Trial court had only **two options**:
 - ➔ **Life imprisonment**
 - ➔ **Death penalty**
- It **could not impose intermediate sentences** like fixed-term life imprisonment without remission.

2. Legal Limitation on Trial Courts

- **The High Courts and the Supreme Court** can change a **death sentence** into a **fixed-term life imprisonment (like 20–30 years)** without early release.
- **Trial courts cannot do this.**

- Based on rulings:
 - ➔ **Swamy Shraddananda (2008)**
 - ➔ **Union of India v. Sriharan (2015)**
- Trial courts **cannot create special sentencing categories**.
- **Kiran (2025) ruling** states that **Sessions Courts cannot choose a punishment between 14 years and death penalty**.
- There **exists a gap ("hiatus") between life imprisonment (possible release after 14 years) and death penalty**.
- The judge found **14 years too lenient** for the brutality involved.
- Due to lack of alternatives, the court **chose the death penalty**.

3. Criticism and Systemic Issues

- **Contradiction in law:**
 - ➔ Trial courts can **award death**, but cannot give **lesser harsh alternatives**.
- **The Supreme Court acknowledges the gap**, but still restricts trial courts.
- **Uniformity argument:**
 - ➔ Special sentencing limited to higher courts to avoid **inconsistency**.
- Likely outcome:
 - ➔ **Madras High Court may convert death sentences** into fixed-term life imprisonment.

Are biomass stoves a cleaner, cheaper alternative to LPG?

Prelims: General Studies Paper - 1
Current events of national and international importance

Mains: General Studies - 3
Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

1. Context

- **Due to shortage of LPG, many rural families are going back to firewood**, which increases hard work for women and causes indoor air pollution.

- **Old mud stoves have very low efficiency (around 10%)** and produce a lot of smoke because of poor airflow.
- Modern stoves called **ICS (Improved Cookstoves) are designed to burn biomass** (like wood) more efficiently and cleanly.
- ICS have **higher thermal efficiency (38–45%) and can reduce fuel use by up to two-third.**
- Features like secondary aeration (extra air supply) **help burn harmful gases and soot, reducing pollution and improving health.**

2. How Can Firewood-Based Cooking Be Made Sustainable?

- **Ensuring controlled harvesting of firewood;** the rate of use does not exceed the rate of forest regrowth.
- **Improved Cookstoves increase fuel efficiency** and reduce the amount of firewood needed.
- **Using alternative biomass fuels** like pellets and briquettes made from agricultural waste
- **Diversifying fuel sources helps reduce pressure** on forests and supports sustainability.
- **Emission reductions from clean cooking can generate carbon credits,** making clean stoves more affordable.

3. Cost of Equipment and Fuel in Firewood-Based Cooking

- **Upfront cost varies widely, household improved cookstoves start below ₹2,000,** while commercial models can exceed ₹20,000.
- Financing support through microfinance, CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility), and carbon finance helps low- and middle-income households afford these stoves.
- **Improved cookstoves can cut firewood consumption by over 50%,** lowering long-term expenses.
- **Firewood is cheaper than LPG, with average costs around ₹10/kg,** while LPG prices in cities have crossed ₹100/kg during supply shortages.

4. Supply Chain for Mass Adoption of Biomass Cookstoves

- **No massive investment is needed as fuels** like firewood, crop waste, and dung are already locally available.
- **Focus should be on strengthening distribution networks** rather than building new supply chains.
- **Efficient logistics and last-mile delivery are crucial** for reaching rural and remote users.
- **Local partnerships** (NGOs, self-help groups, local vendors) help in scaling adoption.
- **User awareness and after-sales support ensure long-term usage** and sustainability.

KEYWORDS

International Election Visitors' Programme (IEVP) 2026

- The **International Election Visitors' Programme (IEVP) 2026, organised by the Election Commission of India, aims to familiarise global delegates** with India's robust electoral system.
- It involves **participation of around 40+ delegates from over 20 countries who observe elections in states like Assam, Kerala, and Puducherry.**
- It **provides a comprehensive overview of India's electoral framework,** including institutional mechanisms and operational architecture.
- The **programme showcases technologies like EVMs (Electronic Voting Machines), VVPATs (Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trails),** and digital tools such as the cVIGIL app.
- **Delegates directly observe polling processes, including queue management, security arrangements, voting procedures, and sealing of machines,** and interact with stakeholders like Chief Electoral Officers (CEOs) and District Election Officers (DEOs).

Species In News

Sentinel species

- A **sentinel species** is an organism whose **health indicates the condition of an ecosystem**.
- They provide **early warnings** of environmental problems like **pollution** and **disease**.
- These species are **highly sensitive** and respond **quickly to changes** in their surroundings.
- They often live in **fixed habitats** and can **accumulate toxins over time**.
- Their biological traits make environmental impacts **more visible and detectable**.
- **Frogs** are a common example, and a **decline in their population** signals **wider ecological stress**.

Personalities in news

Jyotirao Phule

- Jyotirao Phule (1827–1890) was a major social reformer who **criticised the Hindu caste system**, worked for **equality of Shudras, Dalits, and women**, and emphasized **education as the key to social change**.
- Born in a **Mali (Shudra) caste family** in present-day Maharashtra, he faced caste discrimination early in life; an incident at a Brahmin wedding shaped his resolve to fight **caste oppression**.
- In **1848**, he started a **school for lower-caste girls in Pune**, with his wife **Savitribai Phule** as a teacher; they later opened more schools and worked for **female education, widow remarriage, and against child marriage**.
- They started **Balhatya Pratibandhak Griha (1863)** to prevent infanticide and provide a safe space for pregnant widows .
- In **1873**, he founded the Satyashodhak Samaj to promote **social equality, unity of lower castes, and rejection of Brahmanical dominance**, allowing membership across castes and religions.
- His work, **Gulamgiri (1873)**, was dedicated to the American people who fought to abolish slavery, linking the plight of Indian “lower” castes to that of Black Americans.

