

THE 128TH CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT BILL 2023: 33% RESERVATION FOR WOMEN IN THE LOK SABHA AND ALL STATE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLIES

Why in News?

- In a move set to have a wide impact on Indian electoral politics, the Government of India introduced (in the ongoing 5-day special session of Parliament) the 128th Constitutional Amendment Bill 2023.
- It attempts to bring in **33% reservation for women** in the Lok Sabha and all state Legislative Assemblies and extends the quota to the seats reserved for SC/STs.

Highlights of the 128th Constitutional Amendment Bill 2023:

- The Bill introduced in the Lok Sabha (by the Union Minister of Law and Justice) is **similar to the legislation passed by the Rajya Sabha in 2010** [108th Constitutional Amendment Bill 2008].
- According to the new Bill, **as nearly as maybe, one-third** (including the seats reserved for women belonging to the SCs and STs) of the total number of seats to be filled by direct election to the House of People/ LS shall be reserved for women.
 - **The Bill proposes a similar provision for Assemblies in the states and Delhi.**
 - However, the quota will not apply to the Rajya Sabha or state Legislative Councils.
- Like the previous Bill, the new Bill proposes to introduce new articles - **330A and 332A** - in the Constitution to introduce the changes for Lok Sabha and Assemblies respectively.
- Like the 2010 Bill, the current one also has a **sunset clause**, mandating that the reservation will be for a period of 15 years from the date of commencement of the Act.
- However, **the key difference from the previous version** is that the Bill makes the implementation of women's reservation contingent upon the delimitation process.
 - The upshot of these conditions is that women's reservation **may not effectively be operationalised in Lok Sabha before the general elections of 2029.**
 - **The 42nd Amendment froze** the delimitation exercise until the results of the first Census after 2000 was published.

- In 2001 (**84th Amendment**), this was further extended for 25 years. This means, delimitation would happen after the results of the first Census after 2026 is published.

News Summary Regarding the 128th Constitutional Amendment Bill 2023:

- Once passed, the **Narishakti Vandan Adhiniyam** will take the number of women MPs in the Lok Sabha, as per its present strength of 543, to **181**. The current House has 82 women MPs.
- Given that it is a Constitutional amendment Bill, it needs to be passed by both the Houses with “**special majority**” -
 - A majority of the total members of each House, plus
 - A majority of two-thirds of the House present and voting
 - And to be ratified by at least half the state Assemblies.
- Observing the growing contribution of women in every sector, **the Bill aims to include more of them in policy-making.**
- In the decision-making process, women can bring **different perspectives and enrich the quality of legislative debates and decision-making.**
- However, **the Opposition accused** the government of “fooling the people” by not bringing in the reservation immediately, and introducing the Bill solely with an eye on the 2024 Lok Sabha polls.

[THE FUTURE IS EURASIA: WITH G20-IMEC PLAN, THE GLOBAL ORDER SHIFTS TO EURASIA](#)

Context

- At the 18th G20 Summit in New Delhi, US President and the leaders of India, Saudi Arabia, UAE, France, Germany, Italy, and the European Commission, **unveiled the multi-modal India-Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEC).**
- This is an ambitious project **facilitating India’s connection to the Arabian Gulf via sea lanes, and a northern route, linking Saudi Arabia to Europe through Jordan and Israel.**

Significance of India-Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEC)

- **Embodiment of A Collective Vision**

- The combined GDP of the IMEC nations (including the EU as a bloc) is **roughly \$47 trillion, representing about 40 per cent of the world's total GDP.**
- The IMEC embodies a collective vision for the broader Eurasian supercontinent, extending beyond trade, energy, and digital resilience.

- **A Path Towards Interlinked Trans-oceanic System:** The Corridor aims to forge a path towards an increasingly interwoven transoceanic system that extends from the Mediterranean region through West Asia to the expansive Indo-Pacific.

- **Acknowledgment of Rising Non-Western Powers by the West**

- The IMEC serves as an acknowledgment, on the part of the US and EU, of the rising non-Western powers and the **undeniable shift of the economic and geopolitical centre of the world further east.**
- The IMEC **underscores the necessity of ceding more substantial global leadership roles to India, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE,** the actors at the forefront of reconfiguring the future of the economic and geopolitical system in Eurasia.
- Abu Dhabi, Riyadh, New Delhi, and other **emergent powers in Eurasia will wield substantial sway in recalibrating the broader power dynamics** across the supercontinent.

How Will IMEC Shift the Global Order to Eurasia?

- **By Forging Normalised Relations Between Hostile Nations**

- An underappreciated aspect of the IMEC is how its mere existence aside from the design and operational challenges **represents another attempt to bring Saudi Arabia and Israel together.**
- The effort to bring them together under a single transcontinental framework contributes to ongoing US-backed efforts to secure a normalisation agreement between the two nations.

- **By Promoting a Balanced Power Structure in Eurasia**

- The IMEC **embodies the US's Eurasian strategy in the post-US hegemony era,** with the US aiming to shape a balanced power structure across the broader Eurasian landscape.

- The goal is to **prevent a loose coalition of states such as China, Russia, and Iran** from dominating the supercontinent by strengthening the profiles of countries like India, Saudi Arabia, and Japan.
- This will **enable these countries to project economic and geopolitical influence** and actively contribute to a balanced Eurasian power structure.
- **By Europe's Acceptance of a Multipolar Reality Outside Europe**
- For Europe specifically, the Corridor symbolises the bloc's most ambitious effort to attain **geopolitical significance and unity outside the European mainland in the new multipolar reality** by embracing this transoceanic framework.
- Italy, Germany, and France seek to align their efforts with the United States and Asian powers.
- **They want to go beyond occasional maritime exercises** in the Indo-Pacific as they work to integrate their economic systems into high-growth markets in the East.

BHARATKOSH PORTAL

Recently, the Union Minister of Civil Aviation launched an e-wallet payment option on Bharatkosh portal.



About Bharatkosh portal:

- It is the initiative of the **Controller General of Accounts, Ministry of Finance, Government of India.**
- It provides one-stop services to **deposit any fees/fine/other money** into the government's account.
- It converges all the Civil Ministries/Departments of the Government of India.
- It aims to **provide 24X7 year-round electronic services** to deposit money into Government account using internet-based payment technologies to the users at the door step through the web-based portal.
- It thus leverages the e-Governance commitment of the Government to provide e-efficient, e-effective, e-excellent government anywhere anytime.

How will the e-wallet facility work?

- The **e-wallet** will be particularly useful for processing of fees for various **regulatory approvals in the Bharat Kosh portal**.
 - It acts as a prepaid wallet that would enable registered users to add funds in advance.
 - Initially, **only NEFT/RTGS mode will be allowed for adding funds**. The users would also be able to generate receipt and challan instantly.
 - The process will enable the generation of receipts and challans instantly, eliminating the problem of failed bank transactions.
 - The facility will only be available to registered Bharatkosh users, wherein a unique wallet ID will be generated for each user to manage the wallet transactions.
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BIMA SUGAM

Why in news?

- The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) will soon roll out **Bima Sugam** - an online marketplace for buying and selling of insurance policies.
- IRDAI claims that the proposed Bima Sugam is a game changer and a UPI moment for the insurance segment.

Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI)

- IRDAI is a statutory body formed under an Act of Parliament, i.e., Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority Act, 1999.
- It was established for overall supervision and development of the Insurance sector in India.
- IRDAI's duties include:
 - Regulating the insurance business
 - Promoting the orderly growth of the insurance business
 - Protecting the interests of policyholders

What's Bima Sugam?

- About

- It is an online platform where customers can choose a suitable scheme from multiple options given by various companies.
- All insurance requirements, including those for life, health, and general insurance (including motor and travel) will be met by Bima Sugam.
- This platform will help in the settlement of claims, whether it is health coverage or death claims, in a paperless manner on the basis of policy numbers.
- **Steps taken by IRDA**
 - IRDAI has appointed a committee for the creation of the platform.
 - It now plans to go for requests for proposals soon to appoint a service provider for the platform.
 - The service providers will be the technological partners for creating and running a platform to provide all the services in one place.
- **Ownership of this platform**
 - Life insurance and general insurance companies will own a 47.5 per cent stake each, while brokers and agent bodies will own 2.5 per cent each.
- **Timeline for the launch**
 - IRDAI initially wanted the Bima Sugam to be up and running by January 2023 but postponed it to August 1.
 - It has now postponed the implementation to June 2024.

What are its benefits?

- **Single window for the policyholder**
- **Empowerment of consumers**
- **Benefits for insurance companies and intermediaries**
- **Universalise and democratise insurance**

Will the physical mode go away?

- Customers will open an insurance account and the policies will be stored in this account, thus obviating the need for physical documents.

- Identifying the right policy, buying it, settling the claims and renewals will be streamlined in online process.
 - The process will be mostly on the lines of demat accounts and online trading in the case of stock markets.
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INDIA – CANADA BILATERAL TIES

Why in News?

- Canada' Prime Minister Justin Trudeau made an allegation of a potential link between agents of the Government of India and the killing of a pro-Khalistan leader and Canadian citizen, Hardeep Singh Nijjar.
- The Five Eyes Intelligence Alliance has called the accusations serious. However, the grouping has refused to publicly condemn the killing of Nijjar in a joint statement.

India – Canada Bilateral Relationship:

- India established diplomatic relations with Canada in **1947**.
- In recent years, both countries have been working to enhance bilateral cooperation in a number of areas of mutual importance.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Canada in April 2015 elevated the bilateral relation to a **strategic partnership**.
- **India – Canada Trade:**
 - Bilateral trade between India and Canada has seen significant growth in recent years, reaching \$8.16 billion in 2022-23.
 - India's exports (\$4.1 billion) to Canada include pharmaceuticals, gems and jewellery, textiles, and machinery, while Canada's exports to India (\$4.06 billion) include pulses, timber, pulp and paper, and mining products.
 - According to industry projections, the **Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)** between Canada and India has the potential to enhance bilateral trade by up to \$6.5 billion.
- **Investment in India:**

- Canada is the 17th largest foreign investor in India with an overall investment of about \$3.3 billion from April 2000 to March 2023.
- More than 600 Canadian companies have a presence in India and more than 1,000 companies are actively pursuing business in the Indian market.
- **Nuclear Trade:**
 - A Nuclear Cooperation Agreement (NCA) with Canada was signed in 2010 and came into force in 2013.
 - In 2015, Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) signed an agreement for supply of uranium ore concentrate to India in 2015-2020.
- **Indian Diaspora:**
 - Canada hosts one of the largest Indian diasporas in the world, numbering **16 lakh people of Indian origin**.
 - India became the top source of foreign students studying in Canada — 2.3 lakh, according to 2022 data.

News Summary:

- India is facing a diplomatic challenge after Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s allegation of a “potential link” between agents of the Government of India and the killing of a pro-Khalistan leader and Canadian citizen.
- The US said it was deeply concerned over Trudeau’s claim about India’s role and it was critical that perpetrators of the murder were brought to justice.
- The UK too described the allegations as serious. Australia’s foreign ministry went a step further and said it had conveyed its concerns on the developments to India at “senior levels”.
- Canada also expelled a senior Indian diplomat for his alleged involvement in the killing of pro-Khalistan leader and Canadian citizen Nijjar.
- The last time an Indian diplomat was expelled by a western country was in 2014 when Devyani Khobragade was ordered by the US to leave the country.
- Canada has asked India to co-operate in the probe.

WHAT IS DHRUVA STRA MISSILE?

India's Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) recently gave the green light to several capital acquisition proposals, including the indigenous Dhruvastra short-range air-to-surface missile.



About the Dhruvastra Missile:

- It is a **helicopter-launched anti-tank guided missile (ATGM)** system.
- It is a **short-range air-to-surface missile**.
- It was **indigenously developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)**.
- Dhruvastra is the **Air Force's version of Helina (Helicopter-launched Nag missile) ATGM**.
- **Features:**
 - It is **equipped with Imaging Infrared (IIR) seeker and operates in "lock on before launch" mode**.
 - The **fire and forget missile has a minimum range of 500 metres and a maximum range of 7 kilometres**.
 - It can be **launched from an altitude of up to 4 kilometres and can hit targets moving at speeds of up to 70 kilometres per hour**.
 - The missile can **engage targets both in direct hit mode as well as top attack mode**.
 - It **works in all kinds of weather, during the day or night, and in various types of terrain, such as deserts, plains, hills and forests**.

What is Man-Portable Anti-Tank Guided Missile (MPATGM)?

- It is a **man-portable version of the Nag missile**.
- It was **developed by DRDO**.
- It can be **carried and fired by infantry soldiers**.
- The MPATGM has a **range of 2.5 kilometres and can be used for short-range anti-tank missions**.