Karnataka High Court strikes down SC/ST quota hike that took total reservation to 56%

Polity · 13 October 2026 · https://www.shanmugamiasacademy.in/current-affairs-english/2026/10/13



News

On 12 Oct 2026 the Karnataka High Court struck down Sections 3 and 4 of a 2022 Karnataka law – to the extent they cross 50% – which had raised SC reservation from 15% to 17% and ST from 3% to 7%, taking total reservation (SC + ST + OBC 32%) to 56%. A bench of Chief Justice Vibhu Bakhru and Justice K.S. Hemalekha held that the Indra Sawhney (1992) 50% ceiling 'is not an elastic limit' and that no extraordinary circumstances were shown.

Key facts

Law	Karnataka SC and ST (Reservation of Seats in Educational Institutions and of Appointments or Posts in the Services under the State) Act, 2022 (assent 11 Jan 2023)
Hike	SC 15 → 17%; ST 3 → 7%; OBC 32%; total 50 → 56%
Verdict	12 Oct 2026 – CJ Vibhu Bakhru, Justice K.S. Hemalekha; Sections 3 and 4 struck down beyond 50% (violating Articles 14, 15, 16)
Other ground	National Commissions for SCs and STs were not consulted beforehand (Articles 338(9), 338A(9))

Next	State weighing a Supreme Court appeal; request to the Centre for Ninth Schedule protection pending

Background

- Indra Sawhney v. Union of India (1992, the 'Mandal case', 9 judges) – reservation must not exceed 50% save in extraordinary situations; 'creamy layer' excluded from OBCs. Maharashtra's Maratha quota was struck down in the Jaishri Patil case (May 2021).
- Articles 15(4), 16(4) – special provisions for backward classes. The 103rd Amendment (2019) – 10% for Economically Weaker Sections (EWS), upheld in Janhit Abhiyan (Nov 2022); but the High Court said it does not lift the 50% ceiling for other categories.
- Ninth Schedule – 1st Amendment (1951), Article 31B. I.R. Coelho case (2007): laws added after 24 Apr 1973 can still be reviewed for violating the basic structure.

Tamil Nadu link: Tamil Nadu has 69% reservation under its 1994 Act (Act 45 of 1994), placed in the Ninth Schedule by the 76th Constitutional Amendment (1994) under CM Jayalalithaa. Split: BC 30%, MBC 20%, SC 18%, ST 1%. A challenge to its validity is pending in the Supreme Court. Karnataka's Act title mirrors Tamil Nadu's.

Shanmugam IAS Academy – your next step

- **Courses:** TNPSC Group 1, 2 / 2A (Prelims + Mains), Group 4, UPSC / IAS – Coimbatore · Madurai · Online – https://www.shanmugamiasacademy.in/fees
- **Books (PDF):** TNPSC PYQ books, UPSC books – https://www.shanmugamiasacademy.in/study-materials
- **Free quiz + daily PDFs:** https://www.shanmugamiasacademy.in/free-pdf-download · All news of this day: https://www.shanmugamiasacademy.in/current-affairs-english/2026/10/13

Admissions – call / WhatsApp: 99941 46662 · 99944 27714 · www.shanmugamiasacademy.in