

## Delimitation Process

### Why in news?

*The Election Commission of India has begun the process of delimitation of Assembly and Parliamentary constituencies in Assam.*

### What is Delimitation?

- Delimitation is the act of **redrawing boundaries of Lok Sabha and state Assembly seats** to represent changes in population.
- The main objective of delimitation is to provide equal representation to equal segments of a population.
- Also, the population does not grow uniformly across all areas of a state.
- Hence, delimitation of constituencies is periodically carried out to reflect both **increase in population** and **changes in its distribution**.

### Who carries out delimitation?

- Delimitation is carried out by Delimitation Commission, appointed by the Government of India under the Delimitation Commission Act.
- The Delimitation Commission is **appointed by the President of India** and works in collaboration with the Election Commission of India.
- It is composed of the following:
  1. a retired Supreme Court judge,
  2. the Chief Election Commissioner of India and
  3. respective State Election Commissioners.
- The Commission is to work without any executive influence.

*The Constitution mandates that the Commission's orders are final and cannot be questioned before any court as it would hold up an election indefinitely.*

### How is delimitation supposed to be carried out?

- Under **Article 82**, the Parliament is to enact a Delimitation Act after every Census.
- Once the Act is in force, the Union government sets up the Delimitation Commission.
- **Objectives** - The Commission is supposed to determine the number and boundaries of constituencies in a way that the population of all seats is the same.
- It is also tasked with identifying seats reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.
- **Publication** - The draft proposals of the Delimitation Commission are published for public feedback. The Commission holds public sittings.

- After hearing the public, it considers objections and suggestions, and carries out changes, if any, in the draft proposal.
- The final order is published in the Gazette of India and the State Gazette concerned and comes into force on a date specified by the President.

### What is the history of previous delimitation exercises?

- In the history of the Indian republic, Delimitation Commissions have been set up four times - 1952, 1963, 1973 and 2002 under the Acts of 1952, 1962, 1972 and 2002.
- However, the 2002 Act did not make any changes in total Lok Sabha seats or their apportionment between various states.
- It also left out a few states including Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Manipur from the exercise due to “security risks.”
- The central government had reconstituted the Delimitation Commission for these 4 states and the UT of Jammu and Kashmir on 6 March 2020.

### Why have we not seen delimitation exercises after each census?

- The last delimitation exercise that changed the state-wise composition of the Lok Sabha was completed in 1976 (based on the 1971 census).
- The Constitution mandates that the number of Lok Sabha seats allotted to a state would be such that the ratio between that number and the population of the state is the same for all states.
- However, this mandate meant that states that took little interest in population control could end up with a greater number of seats in the Parliament.
- The fear of losing meaningful political representation was especially great in the southern states which had greater success in controlling populations than the northern states.
- Delimitation on the basis of population would disenfranchise them politically while the central government would continue to benefit from these states’ economic contributions to the country.
- **Solution** - To allay these fears, the Constitution was amended in 1976 to suspend delimitation until 2001.
- Another amendment postponed this until 2026, hoping that the country would achieve a uniform population growth rate by this time.

### What will be done?

- The process of delimitation will be based on Census data from 2001.
- The last delimitation of constituencies in Assam was done in 1976 on the basis of the 1971 Census.
- While most have welcomed the delimitation process, saying it was long overdue, some have raised concern for using the 2001 census for the process rather than the 2011 one.
- The 2021 census is yet to be carried out.

### Reference

1. [Indian Express | Election Commission begins 'delimitation' in Assam](#)

