

## The Fallout of Delimitation

### Why in news?

A delimitation of the constituencies that will elect Members of the Lok Sabha, following the population figures is to take place in 2026.

### What is delimitation?

- Delimitation literally means the act of fixing the boundaries of constituencies.
- Under **Article 82** of the Constitution, Parliament enacts a Delimitation Act after every Census which establishes a delimitation commission.
- The main task of the commission is redrawing the boundaries of the various assembly and Lok Sabha constituencies to ensure an equitable population distribution.
- Delimitation commissions have been set up four times in the past under 'Delimitation Commission Acts' of 1952, 1962, 1972 and 2002.

### What is the status now?

- The government had suspended delimitation in 1976 until after the 2001 census.
- This is done for the reason that the states' family planning programs would not affect their political representation in the Lok Sabha.
- Later, delimitation based on the 2001 census was done in 2008.
- However, the total number of seats in the Assemblies and Parliament decided as per the **1971 Census** was not changed.
- The constitution has also capped the number of Lok Sabha & Rajya Sabha seats to a maximum of 550 & 250 respectively.
- **The 84th Amendment Act, 2001** has postponed the lifting up of the cap on the maximum seats in the parliament to the year **2026**.
- This was justified on the ground that a uniform population growth rate would be achieved throughout the country by 2026.

*Article 81 of the Constitution defines the composition of the Lok Sabha and it mandates that the composition should represent changes in population.*

### What is the issue with the scheduled delimitation exercise?

- Considering the Census data for 2011, almost half (48.6%) of our population is contributed by the States of Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Bihar, West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh.
- According to the projections made by the Technical Group formed by National Commission on Population, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare for 2011-36, the share of these states in India's population would see an increase.
- The share of states such as Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and West Bengal is said to decline.

- The scheduled delimitation exercise will inevitably lead to
  - a reduced representation for States that have managed to stabilise their populations
  - a higher representation for States that have not stabilised their populations
- This will add to the tension on the north-south front in addition to those we already have.

## What can be done?

- Another freeze can be made for until all States have achieved population stabilisation.
- The demographic and statistical experts can be asked to devise a mathematical model along the lines of the 'Cambridge Compromise' based on a mathematically equitable formula for the apportionment of the seats of the European Parliament between the member-states.
- That formula can be used to customise it for our needs.
- There is an urgent need to limit population and not representation.

## References

1. <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/delimitation-fallout-needs-no-political-forecasting/article6542675ece>

