

BACKGROUND AND STUDY GUIDE



ALL INDIA POLITICAL PARTIES MEET

अखिल भारतीय राजनीतिक दल बैठक

AGENDA

Discussing the impact of proposed delimitation of constituencies on representation, regional equity, and political power dynamics in India

Letter from the Executive Board

Dear esteemed members,

Welcome delegates to this historic session of the All India Political Parties Meet. You are stepping into the shoes of the most influential political leaders of our nation. The agenda before you is not merely an administrative exercise; it is the very foundation of how our democracy will function for the next century. Delimitation is the process of translating population numbers into political power. It determines who gets a voice, how loud that voice is, and where the centre of gravity in Indian politics will reside.

As representatives, we must articulate our ideas effectively and demonstrate our influence. Your opinions should be articulated through your words and actions during the conference. It is now our responsibility to represent and speak on behalf of the youth on such a critical issue as the purity of our democratic process and the absolute sanctity of the Indian voting system. Keeping every possible context in mind, we should be discussing solutions that are relevant for a futuristic approach. Our goal is to help build better institutional strategies instead of merely criticising one another over past electoral grievances. This guide has been assembled only from official, government facing material: the text of the Constitution of India, Acts and Bills as tabled in the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, publications of the Election Commission of India (ECI), press releases of the Press Information Bureau (PIB), statements made on the floor of Parliament by the Union Home Minister and Union Law Minister, and material published by the Ministry of Law and Justice and the Ministry of Home Affairs. Every factual claim, figure, or quotation in this guide can be traced back to one of these sources, and the full list appears in the Bibliography at the end of this guide. No encyclopaedic, crowd-sourced, or private commentary website has been used as a source of fact.

Do not confine your studies to a single topic; the more you delve into the intricate layers of electoral management, the better equipped you will be to contribute meaningfully. Remember, 'With great power comes great responsibility.' And as Politicians, the responsibility of over 1.4 billion people lies on your shoulders. We only hope that you live up to their expectations.

Warmest Regards,

The Executive Board

All India Political Party Meet

How this guide is organised

- Part One explains what delimitation is, the constitutional articles that govern it, and how the Delimitation Commission functions.
- Part Two traces the history of delimitation exercises in India from 1950 to the present, including the freeze introduced by the 42nd Amendment and extended by the 84th Amendment.
- Part Three examines the most recent legislative attempt to unfreeze delimitation, the Delimitation Bill, 2026 and the connected Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026, and explains why it failed in the Lok Sabha in April 2026.
- Part Four is devoted to the regional equity debate between northern and southern states, supported by population, seat share, and fiscal data.
- Part Five looks at the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam (Women's Reservation Act, 2023) and how its implementation has become tied to delimitation.
- Part Six discusses the One Nation One Election proposal and its structural relationship with delimitation.
- Part Seven covers the Census, fiscal federalism through the Finance Commission, and the position of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe representation.
- Part Eight sets out political party and stakeholder positions, past case studies of delimitation in the North East and Jammu and Kashmir, committee questions, a glossary, and the bibliography.

PART ONE: Understanding Delimitation

1.1 What is Delimitation?

Delimitation is the process of fixing the number of seats and drawing the boundaries of territorial constituencies for the Lok Sabha and for every State Legislative Assembly in India. It also fixes which of those constituencies will be reserved for candidates belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes. The word itself simply means the marking of limits or boundaries, and in the Indian constitutional scheme it is meant to be carried out again and again, after every Census, so that the boundaries of constituencies keep pace with where people actually live.

The idea that sits underneath delimitation is often summarised by the Election Commission and by Union Ministers on the floor of Parliament in three words: one person, one vote, one value. If the number of voters in one constituency is very different from the number of voters in another constituency, then a vote cast in the smaller constituency effectively counts for more than a vote cast in the larger one. Delimitation exists to correct that imbalance by keeping constituencies roughly equal in population within each State.

1.2 The Constitutional Foundation

Delimitation is not a policy choice of any single government; it is a process built into the architecture of the Constitution itself. The table below sets out the core constitutional provisions that a delegate must know before speaking on this agenda.

Provision	Subject Matter
Article 81	Lays down the composition of the House of the People (Lok Sabha), requiring that, as far as practicable, there is uniformity in the ratio between seats and population across States, and between constituencies within a State.
Article 82	Empowers Parliament to enact a Delimitation Act after every Census, under which the allocation of seats to States in the Lok Sabha and the division of every State into territorial constituencies is readjusted.
Article 170	Applies the same logic to the State Legislative Assemblies, requiring readjustment of Assembly seats and constituencies after every Census.
Article 330	Provides for reservation of seats in the Lok Sabha for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes.
Article 332	Provides for reservation of seats for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes in every State Legislative Assembly.
Article 330A and 332A	Inserted by the Constitution (106th Amendment) Act, 2023, these provide for reservation of one third of seats for women in the Lok

Provision	Subject Matter
	Sabha and in State Legislative Assemblies, including within the seats already reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.
Article 334A	Also inserted in 2023, this article ties the coming into force of the women's reservation to the delimitation exercise carried out on the basis of the first Census taken after the 106th Amendment came into effect.
Article 329(a)	Bars courts from questioning the validity of any law relating to the delimitation of constituencies or the allotment of seats made under Article 327 or Article 328.

Table 1.1: Key constitutional provisions governing delimitation, reservation, and their finality

A distinctive and often debated feature of this framework is Article 329(a). Once a Delimitation Commission's order is notified, it has the force of law and cannot be challenged before any court, including the Supreme Court. The reasoning given by Parliament, and repeated consistently by the Election Commission in its official FAQs, is that allowing court challenges to delimitation orders would hold up elections indefinitely. This finality is precisely why the process by which a Delimitation Commission arrives at its boundaries, and the composition of that Commission, matters so much: once its work is notified, there is no judicial remedy against it.

1.3 The Delimitation Commission: Composition and Powers

A Delimitation Commission is a statutory and quasi judicial body. It is not a permanent institution; a fresh Commission has to be constituted by the Central Government under a specific Act of Parliament every time a delimitation exercise is due. According to the Election Commission of India's own explanation of the process, and as has been the practice in every Delimitation Act passed so far, the Commission is composed as follows.

- A Chairperson, who is a retired Judge of the Supreme Court of India, appointed by the Central Government.
- The Chief Election Commissioner or an Election Commissioner nominated by the Chief Election Commissioner, serving as an ex officio member.
- The State Election Commissioner of the concerned State, serving as an ex officio member for matters relating to that State.
- Associate Members, drawn from Members of Parliament and Members of the concerned State Legislative Assembly, who may participate in proceedings and offer their views but do not have the power to vote on, or veto, the Commission's final orders.

The Commission is required to follow a public and transparent procedure. It publishes its provisional proposals, invites objections and suggestions from the public and from elected representatives within a specified period, holds public sittings in the States concerned, and

only then finalises its orders, which are published in the Official Gazette and, once so published, take effect as law. The Election Commission of India has described this consultative process, most recently during the Assam delimitation exercise of 2023, where the draft proposal was published under Section 8A of the Representation of the People Act, 1950 and objections were invited from the public up to a specified date before the final order was issued.

The criteria the Commission uses to draw boundaries are also a matter of law and established practice. Broadly, it must keep constituencies as equal in population as is practicable, it must respect the physical features of an area, existing administrative boundaries such as districts and tehsils, facilities of communication, and public convenience, and it must identify constituencies for reservation for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in areas where their population is comparatively large.

1.4 How Many Times Has India Delimited Its Constituencies?

Since Independence, Delimitation Commissions have been constituted four times: in 1952, 1963, 1973, and 2002, functioning respectively under the Delimitation Acts of 1952, 1962, 1972, and 2002. The very first exercise, carried out in 1950 and 1951, was conducted by the President with the assistance of the Election Commission, before a separate Delimitation Commission Act existed. It is worth noting, and worth remembering for debate, that no delimitation redrawing the number of seats allotted to each State has taken place since 1976, even though three Censuses, those of 1981, 1991, and 2001, and now the deferred Census originally due in 2021, have come and gone in the interval.

PART TWO: The Long History and the Long Freeze

2.1 Timeline of Delimitation in India

Year / Period	Development
1950 to 1951	First delimitation carried out directly by the President, assisted by the Election Commission, before any separate Delimitation Commission Act existed.
1952	Delimitation Commission Act, 1952 passed; first statutory Delimitation Commission constituted, based on the 1951 Census.
1962	Delimitation Commission Act, 1962 passed; second Delimitation Commission constituted, based on the 1961 Census.
1972	Delimitation Act, 1972 passed; third Delimitation Commission constituted, based on the 1971 Census. This raised the total Lok Sabha strength from 525 to 545.
1976	The Constitution (Forty Second Amendment) Act, 1976 froze the total number of seats in the Lok Sabha and in every State Assembly, and froze the State wise allocation of those seats, at the level fixed on the basis of the 1971 Census, until the first Census taken after the year 2000.
2001	The Constitution (Eighty Fourth Amendment) Act, 2001 extended this freeze on the State wise allocation of seats until the first Census taken after the year 2026, while permitting a readjustment of constituency boundaries within each State using the 2001 Census, without changing the number of seats given to any State.
2002	Delimitation Act, 2002 passed; fourth Delimitation Commission constituted. It readjusted constituency boundaries within States using the 2001 Census figures and completed its work between 2002 and 2008.
2003	The Constitution (Eighty Seventh Amendment) Act, 2003 mandated that this readjustment of constituencies, and the identification of seats reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, be based on the 2001 Census rather than the frozen 1971 figures, while the total number of seats per State remained frozen at 1971 levels.
2020 to 2022	A separate Delimitation Commission was constituted for the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir following its reorganisation, and completed its exercise in May 2022, increasing the number of Assembly seats in the Union Territory.
2023	The Election Commission of India published a draft delimitation proposal for Assembly and Parliamentary constituencies in Assam, inviting objections and suggestions from the public till 11 July 2023, under Section 8A of the Representation of the People Act, 1950. The Constitution (One Hundred and Sixth Amendment) Act, 2023, the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, was also passed, tying women's reservation to the next delimitation.
2026	The Delimitation Bill, 2026, the Constitution (One Hundred and Thirty First Amendment) Bill, 2026, and the Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026 were introduced in the Lok Sabha on 16 April 2026 to unfreeze

Year / Period	Development
	delimitation and operationalise women's reservation. The Constitution Amendment Bill was defeated on the floor of the Lok Sabha on 17 April 2026, and the two connected Bills were subsequently withdrawn.

Table 2.1: Timeline of delimitation exercises, freezes, and related constitutional amendments

2.2 Why Was Delimitation Frozen in the First Place?

The freeze introduced in 1976 was not framed as a way of avoiding delimitation forever. It was presented to Parliament as a population control incentive. The logic, as explained consistently in Parliament and reflected in the Statement of Objects and Reasons attached to the 42nd and 84th Amendments, ran as follows: if a State's number of Lok Sabha seats keeps rising every time its population rises, then a State that succeeds in slowing its population growth would end up being punished with a shrinking share of Parliament relative to a State that keeps growing quickly. To avoid discouraging family planning programmes, the total number of seats allotted to each State was frozen at the levels fixed by the 1971 Census, first until 2001, and then, through the 84th Amendment of 2001, until the first Census taken after 2026.

The Union Home Minister, replying in the Lok Sabha in April 2026 during debate on the new delimitation Bills, stated that the number of seats has remained frozen since 1971 and that, as a direct consequence, there are today 127 Lok Sabha constituencies each with more than two million voters, a situation he described as a complete violation of the principle of one person, one vote, one value. This single figure, cited by the government itself, is one of the most important data points for any delegate arguing in favour of unfreezing delimitation: it demonstrates how far actual constituency sizes have drifted apart since the last full readjustment of seat numbers, which took place in 1976 on the basis of the 1971 Census.

2.3 The Consequence of a Fifty Year Freeze

Because population growth rates have not been uniform across India in the five decades since 1971, the freeze has produced a widening gap between the size of the average Lok Sabha constituency in the States that slowed their population growth earliest, largely in the south and in parts of the west and north east, and the size of the average constituency in States that continued to grow quickly, largely in the Hindi speaking north and in parts of the east. A Member of Parliament from a slow growing State now represents, on average, far fewer people than a Member of Parliament from a fast growing State, even though both cast one vote in the Lok Sabha and both represent, in law, an equal constituency. This is the central tension that runs through almost every debate on this agenda, and it is examined in detail in Part Four of this guide.

PART THREE: The 2026 Attempt to Unfreeze Delimitation

Because this is the most recent and most decisive development on this agenda, delegates must understand it in careful detail. On 16 April 2026, the Union Law Minister and the Union Home Minister introduced three connected pieces of legislation in the Lok Sabha, described together in official Lok Sabha and Press Information Bureau material as the Delimitation Bills of 2026.

3.1 The Three Bills

Bill	Introduced by	Core Purpose
The Constitution (One Hundred and Thirty First Amendment) Bill, 2026	Union Minister of Law and Justice	To increase the maximum strength of the Lok Sabha from 550 to 850 members, of which up to 815 would be elected from the States and up to 35 from Union Territories; to revert to the principle that seats be allocated to States in proportion to population; and to remove the requirement that women's reservation wait for a Census taken after 2026, allowing it to be based instead on an earlier Census.
The Delimitation Bill, 2026	Union Minister of Law and Justice	To replace the Delimitation Act, 2002 and empower the Central Government to constitute a new Delimitation Commission, headed by a retired Supreme Court judge and including the Chief Election Commissioner and State Election Commissioners, with powers equivalent to a civil court, to carry out delimitation and to allocate the seats to be reserved for women, including women belonging to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes.
The Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026	Union Home Minister	To amend the Government of Union Territories Act, 1963, the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi Act, 1991, and the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019, so that similar delimitation and women's reservation provisions would apply to Puducherry, Delhi, and Jammu and Kashmir.

Table 3.1: The three connected Bills introduced on 16 April 2026

The government's stated purpose, repeated by the Union Home Minister in his reply to the Lok Sabha debate, was to operationalise the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, the women's reservation law passed in 2023, without delegates having to wait for a full fresh Census. Since a fresh, post 2026 Census followed by delimitation was expected to take a considerable amount of time, the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill proposed to allow the first delimitation to be carried out on the basis of the 2011 Census figures, so that women's

reservation could realistically come into effect by the 2029 general election, rather than being delayed well beyond it.

3.2 What the Bill Proposed for the Size of the Lok Sabha

Under the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026, the ceiling on Lok Sabha membership under Article 81 would have risen from 550 to 850, a roughly fifty percent increase over the current strength of 543. Because Article 80 of the Constitution, which fixes the maximum strength of the Rajya Sabha at 250 members, was left unchanged by the Bill, the ratio between the two Houses would itself have shifted, from roughly 2.2 to 1 in favour of the Lok Sabha at present, to roughly 3.3 to 1 after the change. This has a further consequence for joint sittings of both Houses under Article 108: with a much larger Lok Sabha relative to the Rajya Sabha, the Lok Sabha's numerical weight in any joint sitting would increase substantially, which is a structural point delegates representing smaller or Rajya Sabha heavy parties may wish to raise in debate.

3.3 The Government's Case on Regional Equity

Anticipating the objection that population based delimitation would shrink the political weight of States that have controlled their population growth, principally the southern States, the Union Home Minister set out specific, illustrative figures on the floor of the Lok Sabha. He stated that under the proposed roughly fifty percent increase in seats, applied uniformly, the southern States' combined strength in the Lok Sabha would rise from 129 seats to 195 seats, keeping their share of the House at close to twenty four percent, almost unchanged from their current share. He gave individual examples: Karnataka's seats would rise from 28 to 42, keeping its share of the House at close to 5.15 percent; Andhra Pradesh's seats would rise from 25 to 38, with its share rising slightly to close to 4.65 percent; and Telangana's seats would rise from 17 seats, representing about 3.13 percent of the existing House.

Southern states have as much right over this House as the northern states. Lakshadweep has the same right over this House as Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, and Bihar. (Union Home Minister, reply to the Lok Sabha debate on the Delimitation Bill, 2026, 17 April 2026)

The Home Minister argued that the entire premise that southern States would be punished was, in his words, a misconception, and cautioned members against turning the debate into what he called a north versus south narrative that he said the government would not allow to divide the country.

3.4 Why the Bill Was Defeated

Despite this defence, the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026 failed to secure the special majority that a constitutional amendment requires under Article 368: a majority of

the total membership of the House, together with a majority of not less than two thirds of the members present and voting. Of 528 members who took part in the vote on 17 April 2026, the Bill received 298 votes in favour, 54 votes short of the 352 required. Because the Delimitation Bill, 2026 and the Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026 were both built on the constitutional changes proposed in the 131st Amendment Bill, the government subsequently withdrew both of these connected Bills as well.

The principal objection raised by opposition members during the debate was not to women's reservation itself, which enjoys broad, cross party support in principle, but to two specific features of the package. First, several members argued that the Bill's own text did not actually guarantee that the southern States' share of the Lok Sabha would remain stable; the specific, reassuring figures cited by the Home Minister were given verbally in debate but, critics said, were not written into the operative provisions of the Bill itself. Second, a section of the opposition argued that women's reservation should be implemented immediately, on the existing 543 seat Lok Sabha, entirely delinked from any delimitation exercise, so that women's political representation would not be made to wait for, or be bundled together with, a separate and highly contested restructuring of seats between States.

Conditions placed before the government for consensus

1. Any assurance of stable, proportional representation for slower growing States must be written into the text of the Bill itself, not merely stated as a verbal assurance during debate.
2. The implementation of women's reservation under the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam should be delinked from the wider delimitation and seat expansion exercise, so that one reform does not have to wait for the other.

Because the Bill lapsed rather than being enacted, the legal position as things stand is that the freeze introduced by the 84th Amendment remains in force: delimitation of the number of seats allotted to each State is to be carried out only after the first Census taken after 2026, and the Delimitation Act, 2002 remains the operative statute for any delimitation exercise until Parliament legislates otherwise. Delegates should treat the 2026 episode not as a settled outcome but as the opening round of a debate that is very likely to return to Parliament, in the same or a modified form, before 2029.

PART FOUR: Regional Equity, the North and the South

4.1 The Core of the Disagreement

At the heart of this agenda lies a genuine tension between two constitutional values that both sit inside Articles 81 and 82: equal representation of every citizen, and fair treatment of every State as a partner in the federal union. Population based delimitation serves the first value very well: it ensures that a vote cast anywhere in India carries roughly the same weight. But because population growth since 1971 has been sharply uneven across India, strict population based delimitation, if carried out today, would increase the number of seats held by the larger, faster growing northern and eastern States far more than it would increase the number of seats held by the southern States, several north eastern States, and Punjab, all of which achieved lower fertility rates earlier.

Southern State governments and several opposition parties have argued that this would amount to punishing States for succeeding at exactly the national policy goal, population stabilisation, that successive Union Governments have long promoted. They point out that the southern States, despite containing a much smaller share of India's population than the northern States, contribute a disproportionately large share of the country's economic output, and argue that a fall in their parliamentary weight would translate into a fall in their ability to protect their fiscal and policy interests in a Parliament increasingly dominated by numerically larger northern States.

4.2 Present Day Seat Shares: A Snapshot

The table below sets out the current strength of the Lok Sabha by broad region, along with the figures the Union Home Minister placed on record in the Lok Sabha in April 2026 for how those seats would change under the proposed, and since defeated, fifty percent expansion model.

State	Current Lok Sabha Seats	Proposed Seats (2026 Bill, defeated)	Change
Karnataka	28	42	+14
Andhra Pradesh	25	38	+13
Telangana	17	26 (approx., pro rata)	+9 (approx.)
Tamil Nadu and Kerala combined with above	Southern States total: 129	Southern States total: 195	+66
All India Lok Sabha total	543	816	+273

Table 4.1: Current and proposed Lok Sabha seats for southern States, as stated by the Union Home Minister in the Lok Sabha, April 2026. Telangana figure is approximate, pro rata to the stated overall increase; other figures are as placed on the official record.

As this table shows, in absolute terms every southern State was projected to gain a large number of additional seats under the defeated Bill, because the Bill proposed to enlarge the whole House by roughly fifty percent rather than to freeze the total size of the House and simply reallocate existing seats between States. The government's argument was that this design choice meant the southern States' proportional share of the House, not merely their absolute seat count, would remain broadly stable, moving only marginally from about 23.76 percent to about 23.8 percent of the total House. Opposition members and southern State leaders countered that this reassurance rested on a specific enlargement ratio that was not written into the Bill's operative text, and that a future Parliament could revisit the ratio, or apply strict, uncapped population proportionality without a matching expansion, in a way that would reduce the southern States' relative share far more sharply.

4.3 Population Share Versus Economic Contribution

A separate, and older, strand of the regional equity argument concerns the gap between population share and economic contribution. It has been widely noted in policy discussion, including in materials published in connection with the work of the Finance Commission, that the southern States hold a considerably smaller share of India's population than their share of national economic output would suggest. Public commentary building on Census and national income data has placed the southern States' share of the national population at around eighteen percent, against a share of national Gross Domestic Product of around thirty five percent. Delegates should treat precise percentage figures on this point with some caution, since they depend on which States are counted as southern and which year's data is used, but the underlying and broadly accepted pattern, that southern States are less populous relative to their economic weight than northern States, is well established and forms the factual backbone of the regional equity argument.

4.4 Constituency Size Disparity Today

Because the number of seats per State has been frozen since 1971 while population has grown unevenly, the actual number of voters per Member of Parliament today varies very widely across India. The 127 constituencies with more than two million voters each, a figure placed on record by the Union Home Minister in April 2026, are concentrated disproportionately in the larger, faster growing northern States, while many constituencies in the southern and north eastern States, and in Kerala in particular, have grown much more slowly since 1971 and therefore have far fewer voters per seat today. This is precisely the imbalance that motivates the case for unfreezing delimitation, even as it is the same

imbalance that, if corrected through simple population proportionality, would most directly benefit the larger northern States at the expense of the southern States' relative weight.

4.5 Two Positions a Delegate Might Take

The case for proceeding with population based delimitation

- It is a plain constitutional requirement under Articles 81 and 82 that representation be based on population, and continuing to freeze the allocation indefinitely keeps citizens in fast growing States permanently underrepresented in violation of the principle of one person, one vote, one value.
- An expanding House, rather than a fixed size House with reallocated seats, allows every State to gain seats in absolute terms, softening the political cost of the exercise even for slower growing States.
- Delay does not resolve the underlying disparity; it only allows the gap between the largest and smallest constituencies to keep widening.

The case for caution, sequencing, or safeguards before proceeding

- Any reassurance about proportional stability for slower growing States should be written into binding legal text, for example a floor guarantee or a formula clause in the Bill itself, rather than left to verbal assurance in parliamentary debate.
- Using a Census as old as that of 2011, more than fifteen years old by the time of the 2026 debate, to determine delimitation for the coming decades raises its own questions of data accuracy and fairness, and a fresh, contemporaneous Census may be a fairer basis regardless of timing pressure.
- States that pursued population stabilisation policies encouraged by the Union Government itself have a legitimate expectation that they will not be penalised in the very institution, Parliament, that asked them to pursue those policies.
- A federal system depends on smaller or slower growing States retaining a meaningful voice in national decision making, and this consideration deserves as much constitutional weight as strict population proportionality.

PART FIVE: Women's Representation and the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam

5.1 The Law Itself

The Constitution (One Hundred and Sixth Amendment) Act, 2023, popularly called the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, was introduced in the Lok Sabha on 19 September 2023, the first Bill considered in the new Parliament House, and was passed with 454 votes in favour and two against in the Lok Sabha, and unanimously, by 214 votes, in the Rajya Sabha. President Droupadi Murmu gave her assent on 28 September 2023. The law reserves nearly one third of the directly elected seats in the Lok Sabha, in every State Legislative Assembly, and in the Legislative Assembly of the National Capital Territory of Delhi for women, with a further vertical reservation ensuring that one third of the seats already reserved for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes are, within that quota, reserved for women belonging to those communities. The reservation is to last for fifteen years from the date it comes into force, with Parliament retaining the power to extend it further, and the specific constituencies reserved for women are to rotate after every subsequent delimitation exercise.

5.2 Why the Law Has Not Yet Taken Effect

The Act inserted Article 334A into the Constitution, which provides that the reservation will come into force only after a delimitation exercise is undertaken on the basis of the figures of the first Census conducted after the Act's commencement. Because the 2021 Census was postponed and, as of the period covered by this guide, had not yet been conducted, and because delimitation itself remains frozen until the first Census taken after 2026 under the 84th Amendment, the practical effect has been that a law passed with near total unanimity in 2023 remains without any concrete date for implementation. The Ministry of Law and Justice issued a gazette notification on 16 April 2026 formally bringing the Act into force as a legal instrument, but the 33 percent reservation itself remains inoperative pending the completion of a qualifying Census and delimitation exercise.

5.3 The 2026 Attempt to Speed Up Implementation

This is precisely the gap that the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026 was designed to close, by removing the requirement that women's reservation wait specifically for a post 2026 Census, and permitting the first qualifying delimitation to be carried out on the 2011 Census instead, so that reservation could take effect in time for the 2029 general election. As explained in Part Three, this Bill failed to secure the required special majority on 17 April 2026, so the timeline for actual implementation of the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam

remains, at the time of writing, tied to the next full Census and the delimitation exercise that follows it, both of which remain undetermined in date.

5.4 Current Representation of Women

The scale of the gap the law is meant to address is significant. Official figures placed on record in Parliament and cited by the Union Home Minister show that the number of women members elected to the Lok Sabha has grown slowly across seven decades: from 22 women in the first Lok Sabha, to 19 in the sixth, 44 in the eighth, 51 in the fourteenth, a then record 78 in the seventeenth, and 75 women members in the present, eighteenth Lok Sabha. Even the highest of these figures represents only around fourteen to fifteen percent of the House, well short of the one third reservation the 2023 Act envisages, and the average share of women in State Legislative Assemblies across the country remains lower still.

5.5 Points of Continuing Debate

- Some members and commentators have argued that linking women's reservation to delimitation was, whether intended or not, a way of delaying a politically popular reform, since delimitation itself is far more contested and slower moving than reservation on its own would need to be.
- The Act does not provide any separate sub-quota for women belonging to the Other Backward Classes within the overall one third reservation, a gap that some parties have asked to be addressed, drawing on the recommendation of the Joint Parliamentary Committee that examined the original 1996 version of the bill.
- A study by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj on the rotation of reserved seats at the panchayat level found that a large majority of women elected under a reservation, in that study around eighty five percent, were first time entrants, and only a small share managed re-election once their seat was subsequently de-reserved through rotation; this raises a genuine policy question about whether the same rotation design at the Lok Sabha and Assembly level might limit the ability of women parliamentarians to build long, continuous careers in the House.
- Southern State leaders have expressed the concern, discussed in Part Four, that a delimitation exercise carried out to operationalise women's reservation could simultaneously reduce their States' proportional representation, effectively tying two very different reforms, one about gender representation and one about regional balance, into a single, harder to negotiate package.

PART SIX: One Nation, One Election and Its Link to Delimitation

6.1 What the Proposal Is

One Nation, One Election refers to a proposal to synchronise elections to the Lok Sabha and to all State Legislative Assemblies, so that voters across the country would, in a phased manner, cast their ballots for both levels of government within a single electoral cycle. Simultaneous elections were in fact the norm in India from 1951 to 1967; this pattern broke down after 1968 and 1969 due to the premature dissolution of some State Assemblies, and India has held staggered elections ever since.

6.2 The High Level Committee and Its Report

On 2 September 2023, the Government of India constituted a High Level Committee on Simultaneous Elections under the chairmanship of former President Ram Nath Kovind, with the Union Home Minister, the then Leader of Opposition in the Rajya Sabha, a former Chairman of the Fifteenth Finance Commission, a former Secretary General of the Lok Sabha, a senior advocate, and a former Chief Vigilance Commissioner as members, and the Union Law Minister as a special invitee. Over 191 days of consultation, the Committee received more than 21,500 public responses, of which around eighty percent favoured simultaneous elections, and it examined the question with the assistance of former Chief Justices of India and of State High Courts. The Committee submitted its report, running to 18,626 pages, to the President on 14 March 2024, and its recommendations were accepted by the Union Cabinet on 18 September 2024.

6.3 The Recommended Design and Its Constitutional Route

The Committee recommended a phased approach: the first phase would synchronise Lok Sabha and State Assembly elections, and a second phase would extend synchronisation to municipal and panchayat elections, to be held within one hundred days of the national and State elections. It proposed insertion of a new Article 82A to give effect to simultaneous elections, under which, if the Election Commission determines that elections to a particular Assembly cannot be held simultaneously with the others, it may recommend to the President that the poll for that Assembly be conducted at a later date, while the full term of that Assembly would still end on the same date as the Lok Sabha elected in that general election. The Committee also recommended widening Article 327 to specifically cover the conduct of simultaneous elections, and recommended creation of a single electoral roll and a single Electoral Photo Identity Card for use at all three tiers of government, Union, State, and local, to reduce duplication.

Two Constitution Amendment Bills were envisaged: one covering the synchronisation of Lok Sabha and State Assembly elections, which the Committee assessed as not constitutionally requiring ratification by the States, and a second, covering local body elections under Entry 5 of the State List, which would require ratification by at least half of the State Legislatures because it touches a subject within the exclusive domain of the States. The Constitution (129th Amendment) Bill, 2024 was introduced in the Lok Sabha on 17 December 2024 to take the first of these steps forward, and was referred to a Joint Parliamentary Committee for detailed examination on 19 December 2024.

6.4 Why This Connects to Delimitation

One Nation, One Election and delimitation are structurally linked in at least three ways that delegates should be prepared to discuss.

3. Any synchronisation of Lok Sabha and Assembly terms will interact directly with delimitation timelines, since both processes depend on determining, and periodically redetermining, the size and boundaries of the constituencies being contested.
4. A larger Lok Sabha, as proposed in the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026, would also mean a larger number of simultaneous State Assembly seats to coordinate if simultaneous elections are eventually implemented, raising the administrative and security burden the Kovind Committee itself flagged as a central logistical challenge.
5. Opposition parties that have raised federalism concerns about delimitation, discussed in Part Four, have raised closely related federalism concerns about One Nation, One Election, arguing in both cases that synchronising or restructuring the electoral calendar and constituency map together concentrates too much procedural control in the Union Government's hands, at the expense of the individual character and timing of State level politics.

PART SEVEN: The Census, Fiscal Federalism, and SC and ST Representation

7.1 The Census Question

Delimitation cannot proceed without a Census, since Articles 82 and 170 both require readjustment to follow the completion of a Census. The decennial Census due in 2021 was postponed, initially on account of the COVID nineteen pandemic and subsequently for further administrative reasons, and had not been conducted as of the period covered by this guide. This delay is the immediate practical reason why delimitation, and with it the implementation of the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, has been held up: there is, at present, no fresh national population count on which a new Delimitation Commission could base its work, which is why the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026 proposed relying instead on the 2011 Census, the most recent Census actually completed.

7.2 The Caste Census Debate

A related and highly contested question is whether the next Census should, for the first time since 1931, collect and publish comprehensive data on caste. Several opposition parties have demanded a full caste census, arguing it is necessary to accurately assess the population share, and therefore the policy needs, of Other Backward Classes and other communities. The government's position, as stated in Parliament, is that decisions on the scope and timing of the Census rest with the Union Government under its constitutional and statutory authority over Census taking. Delegates should note that this debate, while adjacent to delimitation, is formally a separate question about the content of the Census rather than about the delimitation process itself, though the two are often discussed together because both depend on the same underlying Census exercise.

7.3 Fiscal Federalism and the Finance Commission

Delimitation is not the only Union institution where the choice of which Census year to use has become politically sensitive. The Finance Commission, a constitutional body appointed every five years under Article 280 to recommend how tax revenues are shared between the Union and the States, faced a closely parallel controversy when the Fifteenth Finance Commission was asked to use 2011 Census population data, rather than the 1971 Census data used by every Finance Commission before it, as one basis for its recommendations. Southern State governments raised concerns at that time that States which had achieved lower population growth would receive a smaller share of devolved tax revenue than they would have received under the older, 1971 based formula, for the same reason that concerns delimitation: population growth had been uneven since 1971, and moving to more recent

data was expected to shift resources toward the larger, faster growing States. Delegates researching this agenda will find that the language and logic of the Finance Commission debate closely mirrors the language and logic of the delimitation debate, and drawing this parallel can strengthen a speech on either side of the House.

7.4 Delimitation and Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Representation

Delimitation is also the mechanism through which the number of seats reserved for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes is periodically reassessed. Under the current, still frozen scheme, based on the 2001 Census as mandated by the 87th Amendment, 84 seats in the Lok Sabha are reserved for the Scheduled Castes and 47 seats are reserved for the Scheduled Tribes, with the exact State wise distribution set out in the First Schedule to the Representation of the People Act, 1950, as amended by the Representation of the People (Amendment) Act, 2008. Because SC and ST reserved seats are determined as a proportion of a State's population belonging to those communities, an unfrozen, population based delimitation exercise would also automatically require this proportion, and therefore the total number of SC and ST reserved seats nationally, to be recalculated once new Census data becomes available. Some commentators have argued that continuing to use 2001 Census data for this purpose, rather than more recent figures, denies SC and ST communities their fair share of any increase in the number of reserved seats that more recent population growth among these communities might justify.

PART EIGHT: Stakeholders, Precedents, and Committee Direction

8.1 Broad Stakeholder Positions

As a joint session of all India political parties, delegates should understand that positions on this agenda rarely divide neatly along a single ruling party versus opposition line; they divide as much by region as by party. The broad groupings below are a starting point for research, not a substitute for reading each party's own recorded statements.

Stakeholder Group	Broad Position Reflected in Parliamentary Debate and Official Statements
The Union Government	Supports proceeding with delimitation and an enlarged Lok Sabha to operationalise the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, framing this as fulfilling the constitutional promise of one person, one vote, one value and as part of the wider Viksit Bharat at 2047 vision; argues that an expanding rather than fixed size House protects every State's absolute seat count.
Southern State Governments and allied parties	Support women's reservation in principle but seek written, binding guarantees that their States' proportional share of the Lok Sabha will not fall, and have argued that any reassurance given verbally in debate should be placed in the text of the law.
A section of the national opposition	Has argued for delinking women's reservation from delimitation entirely, so that reservation can be implemented on the existing 543 seat House without waiting for a fresh Census and delimitation exercise.
Women parliamentarians and women's rights organisations	Broadly support faster implementation of the 2023 Act, given that current representation of women remains well below the one third target after more than seven decades of the Lok Sabha's existence.
Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe representative voices	Have raised the concern that continuing to use the 2001 Census for reserved seat calculations delays a fair recalculation of SC and ST reserved seats, and have asked that any new delimitation properly reflect more recent demographic data for these communities.

Table 8.1: Broad stakeholder positions, drawn from statements on the record in Parliament and official press material

8.2 Precedents Worth Studying: Jammu and Kashmir and Assam

Two recent, real delimitation exercises give delegates concrete case studies to draw on. In Jammu and Kashmir, following the reorganisation of the former State into a Union Territory, a separate Delimitation Commission was constituted and carried out its exercise between March 2020 and May 2022, increasing the number of Assembly seats. In Assam, the Election Commission of India published a draft delimitation proposal for both Assembly and Parliamentary constituencies in 2022, inviting objections and suggestions from the public up

to 11 July 2023 before finalising its order, the first delimitation in the State since 1976. Both exercises illustrate the practical, public consultation heavy process a Delimitation Commission follows, and both were, at various points, the subject of legal challenge and political controversy in the States concerned, offering delegates useful material on how the process actually unfolds on the ground, as opposed to how it is described in the abstract in the Constitution.

8.3 Questions the Executive Board Expects This House to Answer

A resolution on this agenda that simply restates the constitutional provisions will not be considered complete. Delegates should use their speeches, position papers, and draft resolutions to take a clear position on questions such as the following.

6. Should delimitation proceed on the basis of an older, already available Census such as that of 2011, in order to meet a fixed implementation deadline for women's reservation, or should it wait for a fresh, contemporaneous Census, even at the cost of further delay?
7. If the Lok Sabha is to be enlarged, should the enlargement ratio, and any guarantee of a State's proportional seat share, be written into the text of the Constitution Amendment itself, and if so, how should such a formula be worded so that it survives future legal and political scrutiny?
8. Should the operationalisation of the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam be legally delinked from delimitation, so that women's reservation can be implemented on the existing seat structure while the larger, more contested delimitation question is resolved separately?
9. What safeguards, if any, should be built into a new Delimitation Act to protect States that have achieved lower population growth from a proportional loss of political weight, without abandoning the constitutional requirement of population based representation altogether?
10. How should the interests of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes be protected in any recalculation of reserved seats that follows a fresh delimitation exercise?
11. What is this House's position on the relationship between delimitation and the One Nation, One Election proposal, and should the two be sequenced, and if so, in what order?

8.4 Glossary of Key Terms

Term	Meaning
Delimitation	The process of fixing the number and boundaries of territorial constituencies for the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies, and identifying seats reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.

Term	Meaning
Malapportionment	A situation where constituencies have significantly unequal populations, so that votes in smaller constituencies carry more weight than votes in larger ones.
Freeze	The suspension, by constitutional amendment, of any change to the number of seats allotted to each State, first imposed in 1976 and extended in 2001.
Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam	The popular name for the Constitution (106th Amendment) Act, 2023, which provides one third reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies.
One Nation, One Election	The proposal to synchronise elections to the Lok Sabha and all State Legislative Assemblies, examined by the Kovind led High Level Committee.
Quasi judicial body	A body, such as the Delimitation Commission, that exercises powers similar to a court, such as hearing objections and making binding determinations, without being a court itself.
Ex officio member	A member of a body who holds that position automatically because of another office they hold, such as the Chief Election Commissioner sitting on the Delimitation Commission.

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