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Women's Reservation & Delimitation of Lok Sabha Seats

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Why in News?

The Union Government is set to introduce a package of Bills to implement 33% women's reservation in Lok Sabha and State Assemblies by 2029, along with a new delimitation exercise and expansion of Lok Sabha seats.

Summary:

The proposed reforms aim to operationalise the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam (2023) by linking it with delimitation based on latest Census data. The move involves increasing Lok Sabha seats and redrawing constituencies, which has triggered debates over federal balance, regional representation, and North-South divide.

Key Provisions of the Proposed Bills:

Women's Reservation

33% reservation in:

Lok Sabha

State Legislative Assemblies

Likely implementation: 2029 General Elections

Includes SC/ST sub-quota within women's quota

Duration: 15 years (extendable)

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Expansion of Lok Sabha:

Present strength: 543 elected members

Proposed expansion: up to ~815–850 seats

Objective:

Accommodate reservation without reducing current seats

Maintain representation balance among states

Delimitation Exercise:

To be conducted by Delimitation Commission

Based on latest available Census (likely 2011 if expedited)

Purpose:

Redraw constituency boundaries:

Ensure “one person, one vote, one value”

Key Constitutional Changes:

Amendment to Article 81 ? Fix upper limit of Lok Sabha seats (~850)

Amendment to Article 82 ? Changes in delimitation procedure

Introduction of a Schedule specifying state-wise seat allocation

Major Issues & Debate:

North vs South Divide

Population-based delimitation may:

Increase seats in northern states (higher population growth)

Reduce relative share of southern states

Southern states argue they are being penalised for population control

Link Between Reservation & Delimitation:

Critics question:

Why reservation cannot be implemented without seat expansion

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Government argues:

Expansion ensures no state loses seats

Federal & Political Concerns:

Demand for:

All-party consultation

Transparent criteria for seat allocation

Fear of:

Electoral imbalance

Political advantage to certain regions

About Delimitation Commission:

Established under Delimitation Commission Act

Independent body ? orders cannot be challenged in court

Last delimitation: 2002 (based on 2001 Census)

Next delimitation allowed after 2026 freeze ends

Background: Women's Reservation Law:

106th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2023

Also called: Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam

Provides:

33% reservation in Parliament & Assemblies

Implementation after Census + Delimitation

Additional Key Facts:

India ranks low globally in women's representation in Parliament

Panchayati Raj Institutions already provide:

33%–50% reservation for women

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Concept of delimitation rooted in:

Equal representation principle (Article 81)

Freeze on delimitation (1976–2026):

To promote family planning without political penalty