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# Bombay Reorganisation Act, 1960 — Linguistic States, Article 3, and India's Federal Architecture

1 May 2026 · **POLITY**

CURATED &amp; WRITTEN BY

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# Bombay Reorganisation Act, 1960 — Linguistic States, Article 3, and India's Federal Architecture

1 May 2026 · 4 min read · 2 tags

## WHY IN NEWS

May 1, 2026 marks the **66th anniversary** of the **Bombay Reorganisation Act, 1960** — the legislation that bifurcated the bilingual Bombay State into Maharashtra (Marathi-speaking) and Gujarat (Gujarati-speaking). The Act represents the culmination of India's linguistic reorganisation effort that began with the **States Reorganisation Act, 1956** and remains the most concrete example of how language has shaped Indian federal boundaries.

## THE CONSTITUTIONAL BASIS — ARTICLE 3

The reorganisation of states in India is enabled by **Article 3 of the Constitution**:

PROVISION	POWER
Article 3(a)	Form a new state by separation of territory or by uniting two or more states
Article 3(b)	Increase the area of any state
Article 3(c)	Diminish the area of any state
Article 3(d)	Alter the boundaries of any state
Article 3(e)	Alter the name of any state

### Procedure under Article 3:

- 1 Bill must be **introduced only on the recommendation of the President**
- 2 Before recommending, President must refer the bill to the **state legislature concerned** for its views (within a specified period)
- 3 The state legislature's views are not binding on Parliament
- 4 Bill is passed by **simple majority** in both Houses (not requiring constitutional amendment procedure)

This procedure was followed for the Bombay Reorganisation Act 1960.

## THE PATH TO LINGUISTIC REORGANISATION

YEAR	EVENT
1948	Linguistic Provinces Commission (Dhar Commission) — opposed linguistic reorganisation
1948	JVP Committee (Nehru, Patel, Pattabhi Sitaramayya) — also opposed but created political space
1953	Death of Potti Sriramulu after 56-day fast for Andhra; mass agitation
1953	Andhra Pradesh formed by separation from Madras State (first linguistic state)
1953	Fazl Ali Commission (States Reorganisation Commission) appointed
1955	Fazl Ali Commission report submitted (Sep 30, 1955)
<b>1956</b>	<b>States Reorganisation Act 1956</b> — restructured most states on linguistic lines
1956–1960	Samyukta Maharashtra and Mahagujarat movements intensify
<b>1960</b>	<b>Bombay Reorganisation Act 1960</b> — Maharashtra and Gujarat created

## WHY BOMBAY WAS SPECIAL

The 1956 Act reorganised most of India on linguistic lines but retained Bombay as a **bilingual state** because:

- Bombay city had significant populations of both Marathi and Gujarati speakers
- Gujarati commercial interests dominated Bombay's economy
- Marathi-speakers were the **demographic** majority in the broader state
- Both communities laid competing claims to Bombay city

The Central Government attempted to preserve this compromise but the **Samyukta Maharashtra Movement** (led by Senapati Bapat, S.M. Joshi, P.K. Atre) and **Mahagujarat Movement** (led by Indulal Yagnik) made the bilingual arrangement politically unsustainable. By 1960, mass mobilisation forced reorganisation.

The 1960 Act resolved the question by:

- Creating Maharashtra (with Marathi as official language)
- Creating Gujarat (with Gujarati as official language)
- **Allocating Bombay city to Maharashtra** — a major political victory for Marathi-speakers

## THE FAZL ALI COMMISSION FOUNDATION

The States Reorganisation Commission was chaired by **Justice Fazl Ali** (former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court). Its members were **H.N. Kunzru** (educationist) and **K.M. Panikkar** (historian and diplomat). The commission submitted its report on **September 30, 1955**.

The commission's core principle: states should generally follow linguistic boundaries, but with consideration for:

- Geographic contiguity
- Administrative convenience
- Financial viability
- National unity (avoiding linguistic chauvinism)

## SUBSEQUENT LINGUISTIC REORGANISATIONS

The 1960 Act was not the final linguistic reorganisation. Subsequent state creations:

- **Punjab Reorganisation Act 1966** — created Haryana and Himachal Pradesh from Punjab
- **North-Eastern Areas Reorganisation Act 1971** — created Meghalaya, Manipur, Tripura
- **Madhya Pradesh Reorganisation Act 2000** — created Chhattisgarh
- **Bihar Reorganisation Act 2000** — created Jharkhand
- **Uttar Pradesh Reorganisation Act 2000** — created Uttarakhand
- **Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act 2014** — created Telangana
- **Jammu & Kashmir Reorganisation Act 2019** — created J&K and Ladakh UTs

## CONSTITUTIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Bombay Reorganisation Act 1960 illustrates several enduring principles of Indian federalism:

- ❶ **Federalism is dynamic, not static** — Parliament can redraw state boundaries through ordinary legislation
- ❷ **Language remains a powerful organising principle** — even 75+ years after Independence
- ❸ **State legislative consent is consultative, not binding** — under Article 3, Parliament has the final word

**4 Mass movements can compel reorganisation** – Samyukta Maharashtra and Mahagujarat movements forced the 1960 Act

## UPSC RELEVANCE

PAPER	ANGLE
GS2 — Polity	Article 3; State reorganisation; Federal structure; Parliamentary procedure
GS1 — Modern History	Linguistic reorganisation; Fazl Ali Commission; Potti Sriramulu fast
GS2 — Polity	Centre-State relations; cooperative federalism; mass movements and democracy

**Mains Keywords:** Article 3, Bombay Reorganisation Act 1960, States Reorganisation Act 1956, Fazl Ali Commission, Dhar Commission, Samyukta Maharashtra movement, Mahagujarat movement, linguistic reorganisation, federal structure, Potti Sriramulu

### Facts Corner

ITEM	FACT
Bombay Reorganisation Act	1960
Effective	May 1, 1960
States Reorganisation Act	1956
Fazl Ali Commission	1953 (Justice Fazl Ali, H.N. Kunzru, K.M. Panikkar)
First linguistic state	Andhra Pradesh (1953) — after Potti Sriramulu’s death
Article 3	Parliament’s power to redraw state boundaries
Article 3 procedure	President’s recommendation + state legislature consultation (not binding)
Punjab Reorganisation	1966 (Haryana + Himachal Pradesh)
Telangana formation	2014 (Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act)
J&K-Ladakh bifurcation	2019 (J&K Reorganisation Act)

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