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EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

Why 543 Should Remain 543: Delimitation Without Enlargement

THE HINDU

28 August 2026 ·

POLITY

GS2

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INTERVIEW ANGLE

"A state that succeeded at population control would lose seats under a strict population formula. Is that the correct outcome of a democratic principle, or a design flaw that punishes good policy?"

Source: [Original editorial](#)

The Hindu

 Every fact web-verified against primary sources

This is a Hindu lead article and only its opening section is publicly accessible. The framing, the procedural facts and the central question set out below are taken directly from the accessible text and from the headline, which states the conclusion. The exam-facing analysis that follows is our own treatment of the issue, not a paraphrase of the author's further argument.

THE LIFT LINE

Everyone is arguing about which states lose seats. Almost nobody is arguing about whether the House needs to grow at all, and that is the question that decides the first one.

WHY THIS EDITORIAL MATTERS FOR YOUR EXAM

Delimitation is among the highest-probability GS2 topics available right now, and most answers on it make the same error the piece identifies: they treat House size as fixed by arithmetic rather than chosen by design. Getting the constitutional provisions exactly right is what separates a scoring answer from a general one.

GS Paper 2: Parliament and State legislatures, structure and functioning; [devolution](#) of powers; issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure; salient features of the Representation of People's Act.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The procedural moment

Both Houses were **adjourned sine die on 13 August 2026**. The monsoon session **has not yet been formally prorogued**. Because a session ends only on prorogation, the delay leaves open the possibility that Parliament could be **reconvened for a further attempt at the constitutional amendment linked to delimitation and women's reservation**.

The freeze, in sequence

AMENDMENT	YEAR	WHAT IT DID
42nd	1976	Froze seat allocation among states on the 1971 Census , until after the 2001 Census
84th	2001	Extended the freeze until after the first Census taken after 2026
87th	2003	Allowed readjustment of constituency boundaries within states on the 2001 Census , without altering each state's seat total

The distinction the 87th Amendment draws is the whole point: **boundaries inside a state were redrawn; the number of seats each state holds was not touched**. Delimitation and reallocation are separable, and Parliament has already separated them once.

The constitutional provisions

- **Article 81** sets the composition of the Lok Sabha and caps elected members from states at **530**, from Union Territories at **20**.
- **Article 82** requires readjustment after every Census, by an Act of Parliament.
- **Article 170** governs the composition of State Legislative Assemblies and carries a parallel freeze.
- The **Delimitation Commission** is constituted under a **Delimitation Act** passed by Parliament. Its orders have the force of law and **cannot be questioned in any court**. It is chaired by a **serving or retired Supreme Court judge**, with the **Chief Election Commissioner** and the State Election Commissioner concerned as members.

THE ANALYSIS

The two decisions people run together

Delimitation involves at least three distinct choices, and public debate collapses them into one.

- ❶ **How many seats should the Lok Sabha have?**

- 2 How should those seats be distributed among states?
- 3 Where should constituency boundaries run inside each state?

Only the third is what “delimitation” strictly means, and the 87th Amendment already did it on 2001 figures. The controversy is about the second. The first is being treated as answered when it has not been asked.

Why the arithmetic argument is weaker than it looks

The intuitive case runs: population has roughly tripled since 1971, therefore the House must expand so that each member represents a manageable number of citizens.

That case assumes representation is a **ratio**. But no legislature in the world scales linearly with population, and there are reasons.

- A larger chamber does not **deliberate** better. Beyond a point, floor time per member falls, committee work rather than the floor becomes where legislating happens, and party leadership gains power relative to the individual member.
- The **constituency service** burden that drives the ratio argument is an executive and administrative problem, not one solved by adding legislators.
- Expansion is politically **irreversible**, which means it is the one decision that cannot be corrected if the assumption behind it proves wrong.

The federal problem, stated without evasion

If seats are redistributed strictly by population on a post-2026 Census, states whose population growth slowed, largely in the south and west, hold a smaller share of the House than they do today, and states with faster growth hold more.

The uncomfortable feature is that the slower-growing states are those that **implemented national policy on population stabilisation most successfully**. A formula that reduces their weight converts compliance with a national objective into a loss of national voice. That is a genuine grievance and not merely a regional complaint.

Holding the House at 543 does not dissolve this problem. Redistribution within a fixed total is zero-sum, and a state’s share can still fall. What a fixed total does is **keep the loss visible and bounded**, and force Parliament to justify each reallocation, rather than obscuring it inside a general expansion in which everyone gains seats in absolute terms while shares shift silently.

The women’s reservation link

The **106th Constitutional Amendment (Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam), 2023** reserves one-third of Lok Sabha and State Assembly seats for women. Its own terms make it operative **after a delimitation exercise undertaken on the basis of the first Census after its commencement**.

That linkage is why the two questions arrive together, and it creates a real tension: the case for moving quickly on delimitation is partly a case for implementing women's reservation sooner, which pulls against taking the time to settle the House-size question properly.

DATA AND INSTITUTIONS VAULT

PRELIMS-GRADE FACTS:

Present Lok Sabha strength: 543 elected members. Article 81 caps elected members at 530 from states and 20 from Union Territories.

Historical note: the nominated Anglo-Indian seats were abolished by the 104th Amendment, 2019, with effect from 25 January 2020. Do not count them.

42nd Amendment, 1976: froze state-wise allocation on the 1971 Census until after 2001.

84th Amendment, 2001: extended the freeze until after the first Census taken after 2026.

87th Amendment, 2003: permitted readjustment of boundaries within states on the 2001 Census, without changing state totals.

Article 82: readjustment after each Census, by an Act of Parliament.

Article 170: parallel provision and parallel freeze for State Legislative Assemblies.

Delimitation Commissions have been constituted four times: 1952, 1963, 1973 and 2002.

A Delimitation Commission is headed by a serving or retired Supreme Court judge; members are the Chief Election Commissioner and the State Election Commissioner of the state concerned. Its orders cannot be called in question before any court.

106th Amendment, 2023 (Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam): one-third reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies, operative after a delimitation based on the first Census after commencement.

Adjournment sine die ends a sitting without a fixed date; prorogation, by the President under Article 85(2)(a), ends the session. Dissolution ends the House itself.

adjournment sine die is not prorogation. *The presiding officer adjourns; only the President prorogues. A House adjourned sine die can be **reconvened by the presiding officer** without a fresh summons, which is exactly the procedural opening this piece is pointing at. Questions on parliamentary procedure test this constantly.*

the 87th Amendment did not change any state's seat count. *It permitted redrawing boundaries within states on 2001 data. Delimitation of constituencies and reallocation of seats among states are different operations, and only the second is frozen.*

THE DEBATE

For enlarging the House: the average Indian constituency now holds a population larger than that of many countries; representation ratios have deteriorated far beyond comparable democracies; and a larger House allows the 106th Amendment's one-third reservation to be implemented without any sitting member losing a seat, which is the practical politics of it.

For holding at 543: **deliberative** quality does not improve with size; expansion is irreversible; the physical and procedural capacity of Parliament is a real constraint; and a general expansion **conceals** the shift in relative shares between states behind absolute gains for all, which is a worse form of the same federal problem rather than a solution to it.

The genuinely unresolved question: whether India's federal compact can survive strict population-based reallocation at all, and whether some **weighted or floor-protected formula** is required. That is a question about the terms of the union, not about seat arithmetic, and it deserves to be argued as such.

HOW TO THINK ABOUT THIS

The transferable frame: **separate the size of an institution from its composition**. These are almost always run together in public debate, and they answer to different considerations. Size answers to function and deliberative capacity. Composition answers to representation and fairness. Deciding one by reference to the other produces bad institutional design.

Apply the same test to Rajya Sabha reform, to the size of the Council of Ministers, to bench strength in the higher judiciary, and to the composition of regulatory bodies. In each case ask: **what problem is solved by adding members, and would a different composition solve it better?**

WAY FORWARD

- ❶ **Decide the House-size question separately and first**, by an explicit parliamentary decision rather than as a by-product of delimitation.
- ❷ **Publish the reallocation formula before the Census results**, so the rule is agreed behind a partial veil of ignorance rather than negotiated once each state knows what it gains or loses.
- ❸ **Consider a floor guarantee for states**, protecting existing seat shares while distributing any increase, if an increase is agreed.
- ❹ **Delink the women's reservation timeline** from the reallocation question, so that a genuinely difficult federal negotiation does not hold a settled constitutional commitment hostage.
- ❺ **Strengthen the Delimitation Commission's consultative process**, since its orders are immune from **judicial review** and legitimacy must therefore come from the process itself.

PYQ LINKAGE AND PRACTICE

Connects to standing themes on **federalism**, **electoral reform**, and **constitutional amendment procedure**. Practice question: *“Delimitation and enlargement of the Lok Sabha are separate decisions that Indian public debate persistently conflates. Examine the constitutional position and the federal implications of each.”*

Source: Why 543 Should Remain 543: Delimitation Without Enlargement — Ujjyari.com | Free UPSC & State PCS Editorial Analysis

● KEY ARGUMENTS AT A GLANCE

The Hindu lead article argues that with the monsoon session adjourned sine die on 13 August 2026 but not yet prorogued, prompting speculation that Parliament may be reconvened for another attempt at the constitutional amendment linked to delimitation and women’s reservation, Parliament must confront a prior question it has largely skipped: whether delimitation necessarily requires enlarging the Lok Sabha at all, and it answers that it does not, because the apparent arithmetic case for expansion rests on treating representation as a population ratio when constitutional design is not arithmetic alone.



SUPPORTING

- The case for enlargement looks self-evident at first glance, since India’s population has grown enormously since Lok Sabha seats were frozen half a century ago, so representation appears to need corresponding expansion.
- That reasoning treats the size of the House as a derived quantity rather than as a design choice, when the number of seats and their distribution among states are two separable decisions.
- The procedural context gives the question urgency, because the session stands adjourned sine die without prorogation, which leaves open the possibility of reconvening for the constitutional amendment.

**MAINS ANSWER FRAMEWORK****QUESTION**

Delimitation is frequently equated with an enlargement of the Lok Sabha. Examine whether the two are constitutionally linked, and discuss the federal implications of redistributing seats on the basis of the next published Census. (250 words)

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