Delimitation package and Women's reservation

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Why in News?

The Union Cabinet cleared a fresh Constitution Amendment Bill on proposing a 50% increase in Lok Sabha seats across states while freezing states' relative share of seats until 2051 ahead of a special parliamentary sitting.

How delimitation and women's reservation became linked?

- The Constitution (106th Amendment) Act, 2023 enacted as the **Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam, 2023** inserted **Article 334A**.
- It aims the operationalization of one-third reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and state assemblies to delimitation conducted after the relevant Census.
- **The 2023 legislative path-** Passed with broad parliamentary backing in September 2023, the law sequenced women's reservation behind a future Census and delimitation exercise rather than immediate implementation.
- **The April 2026 legislative package -** The Centre introduced three Bills in a special session a Constitution Amendment Bill (proposed as the 131st Amendment) amending
    - Articles 81 and 82 to set caps (up to 815 state-elected and 35 UT-elected Lok Sabha members) and
    - Link delimitation to the latest published Census (2011), a Delimitation Bill, and
    - A Bill extending women's reservation to Union Territories with legislatures but the Constitution Amendment Bill did not pass with the required two-thirds majority in the Lok Sabha.
- **The November 2026 cabinet shift -** The Union Cabinet approved a revised Constitution Amendment Bill pairing a stated 50% increase in seats across states with a freeze on the relative ratio of seat allocation among states until 2051.

What are the constitutional, federal, and political dimensions?

Dimension	Key constitutional and political considerations
Constitutional Formula (Articles 81 and 82)	Article 81(2)(a) sets a uniform state population-to-seat ratio subject to small-state rules, and the Constitution requires delimitation after each Census unless amended; legal experts note that an across-the-board 50% increase and freezing relative state shares requires clear constitutional alignment via Article 81 amendments rather than executive instruction alone.

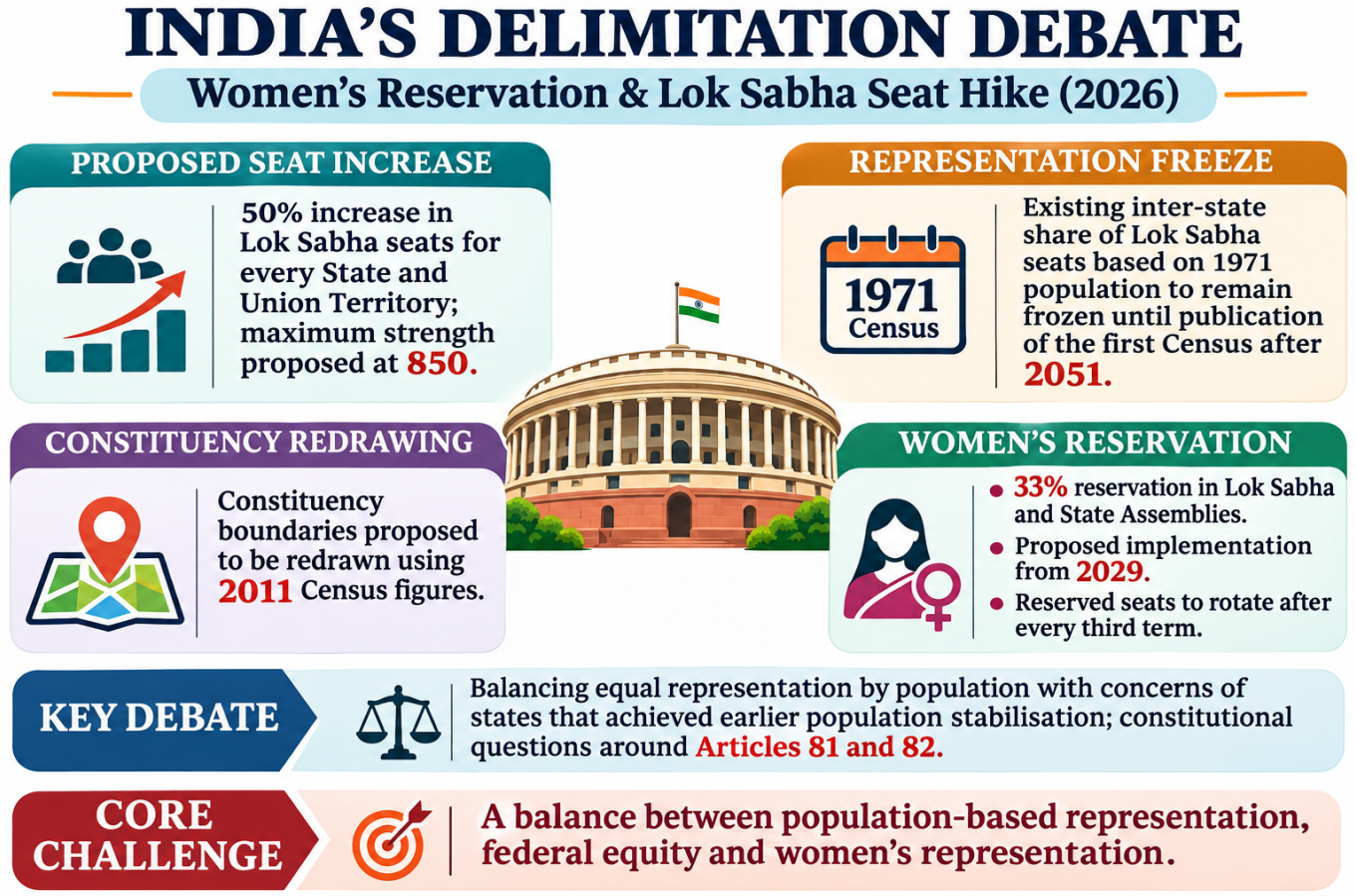
North-South Federal and Demographic Debate	Southern states and regional leaders such as and the February 2024 Tamil Nadu Assembly resolution have sought protection of existing state seat shares (around 7.2% for Tamil Nadu) and population-stabilization incentives, while demographic historians note differing timelines of mortality decline and fertility stabilization across regions.
Immediate Rollout vs. Delimitation Condition	Opposition leaders argue that deleting Article 334A could allow women's reservation without waiting for Census and delimitation, whereas the government links the timeline to delimitation and its proposed 2029 target.
Institutional and Electoral Process Scrutiny	Critics have raised concerns over constituency boundary-drawing, all-party consultation, and confidence in electoral administration ahead of delimitation.

What are the key challenges ahead?

- **Securing two-thirds majority across both houses -** Passing a Constitution Amendment Bill requires supermajorities in both the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, making alignment among coalition and non-NDA parties decisive.
- **Resolving constitutional and drafting ambiguities -** Ensuring statutory text, Article 81/82 provisions, and any freeze on inter-state seat ratios are legally consistent and backed by broad all-party consultation is vital to prevent litigation and political gridlock.
- **Balancing larger house size with effective representation -** Expanding Lok Sabha strength toward 850 raises practical questions about legislative deliberation, constituency scale, and representation across states and Union Territories.

What is the way forward?

- Convene inclusive consultations with opposition parties and state governments so federal concerns over representation shares and demographic transitions are addressed transparently.
- Explicitly reconcile any seat-increase formula, freeze period (such as until 2051), and delimitation rules with Articles 81 and 82 so the legal framework is unambiguous and durable.
- Clarify the exact sequence and timeline for implementing women's reservation in Parliament, state assemblies, and Union Territories with legislatures without avoidable procedural delays.
- Maintain transparent criteria, independent execution, and public confidence in how constituency boundaries and seat numbers are determined.



Reference

[Indian Express | How delimitation will change political representation?]

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