The Fallout of Delimitation

Why in news?

A delimitation of the constituencies that will elect Members of the Lok Sabha, following the population figures is to take place in 2026.

What is delimitation?

- Delimitation literally means the act of fixing the boundaries of constituencies.
- Under **Article 82** of the Constitution, Parliament enacts a Delimitation Act after every Census which establishes a delimitation commission.
- The main task of the commission is redrawing the boundaries of the various assembly and Lok Sabha constituencies to ensure an equitable population distribution.
- Delimitation commissions have been set up four times in the past under 'Delimitation Commission Acts' of 1952, 1962, 1972 and 2002.

What is the status now?

- The government had suspended delimitation in 1976 until after the 2001 census.
- This is done for the reason that the states' family planning programs would not affect their political representation in the Lok Sabha.
- Later, delimitation based on the 2001 census was done in 2008.
- However, the total number of seats in the Assemblies and Parliament decided as per the **1971 Census** was not changed.
- The constitution has also capped the number of Lok Shaba & Rajya Sabha seats to a maximum of 550 & 250 respectively.
- **The 84th Amendment Act, 2001** has postponed the lifting up of the cap on the maximum seats in the parliament to the year **2026**.
- This was justified on the ground that a uniform population growth rate would be achieved throughout the country by 2026.

Article 81 of the Constitution defines the composition of the Lok Sabha and it mandates that the composition should represent changes in population.

What is the issue with the scheduled delimitation exercise?

- Considering the Census data for 2011, almost half (48.6%) of our population is contributed by the States of Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Bihar, West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh.
- According to the projections made by the Technical Group formed by National Commission on Population, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare for 2011-36, the share of these states in India's population would see an increase.
- The share of states such as Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and West Bengal is said to decline.

- The scheduled delimitation exercise will inevitably lead to
    - a reduced representation for States that have managed to stabilise their populations
    - a higher representation for States that have not stabilised their populations
- This will add to the tension on the north-south front in addition to those we already have.

What can be done?

- Another freeze can be made for until all States have achieved population stabilisation.
- The demographic and statistical experts can be asked to devise a mathematical model along the lines of the 'Cambridge Compromise' based on a mathematically equitable formula for the apportionment of the seats of the European Parliament between the member-states.
- That formula can be used to customise it for our needs.
- There is an urgent need to limit population and not representation.

References

1. https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/delimitation-fallout-needs-no-political-forecasting/article6542675ece

