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Delimitation commission

Why in news?

SINCE THE bifurcation of Jammu and Kashmir state into the Union Territories of J&K and Ladakh, delimitation of their electoral constituencies has been inevitable. While the government has not formally notified the Election Commission yet, the EC has held “internal discussions” on the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019, particularly its provisions on delimitation.

Why is delimitation needed?

- Delimitation is the act of redrawing boundaries of Lok Sabha and state Assembly seats to represent changes in population.
- In this process, the number of seats allocated to different states in Lok Sabha and the total number seats in a Legislative Assembly may also change.
- The main objective of delimitation is to provide equal representation to equal segments of a population.
- It also aims at a fair division of geographical areas so that one political party doesn't have an advantage over others in an election. Delimitation is carried out by an independent Delimitation Commission.
- The Constitution mandates that its orders are final and cannot be questioned before any court as it would hold up an election indefinitely.

How is delimitation carried out?

- Under Article 82, the Parliament enacts a Delimitation Act after every Census.



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- Once the Act is in force, the Union government sets up a Delimitation Commission made up of a retired Supreme Court judge, the Chief Election Commissioner and the respective State Election Commissioners.
- The Commission is supposed to determine the number and boundaries of constituencies in a way that the population of all seats, so far as practicable, is the same.
- The Commission is also tasked with identifying seats reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes; these are where their population is relatively large.
- All this is done on the basis of the latest Census and, in case of difference of opinion among members of the Commission, the opinion of the majority prevails.

How often has delimitation been done in the past?

- The first delimitation exercise in 1950-51 was carried out by the President (with the help of the Election Commission), as the Constitution at that time was silent on who should undertake the division of states into Lok Sabha seats.
- This delimitation was temporary as the Constitution mandated redrawing of boundaries after every Census.
- Hence, another delimitation was due after the 1951 Census. Pointing out that the first delimitation had left many political parties and individuals unhappy, the EC advised the government that all future exercises should be carried out by an independent commission.
- This suggestion was accepted and the Delimitation Commission Act was enacted in 1952. Delimitation Commissions have been set up four times — 1952, 1963, 1973 and 2002 under the Acts of 1952, 1962, 1972 and 2002. There was no delimitation after the 1981 and 1991 Censuses.

Why was there no delimitation then?

- The Constitution mandates that the number of Lok Sabha seats allotted to a state would be such that the ratio between that number and the population of the state is, as far as practicable, the same for all states.



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- Although unintended, this provision implied that states that took little interest in population control could end up with a greater number of seats in Parliament.
- The southern states that promoted family planning faced the possibility of having their seats reduced. To allay these fears, the Constitution was amended during Indira Gandhi's Emergency rule in 1976 to suspend delimitation until 2001.

- Although the freeze on the number of seats in Lok Sabha and Assemblies should have been lifted after the 2001 Census, another amendment postponed this until 2026.
- This was justified on the ground that a uniform population growth rate would be achieved throughout the country by 2026.
- So, the last delimitation exercise — started in July 2002 and completed on May 31, 2008 — was based on the 2001 Census and only readjusted boundaries of existing Lok Sabha and Assembly seats and reworked the number of reserved seats.

Why is delimitation for Jammu and Kashmir in the news now?

- Delimitation of Jammu and Kashmir's Lok Sabha seats is governed by the Indian Constitution, but delimitation of its Assembly seats (until special status was abrogated recently) was governed separately by the Jammu and Kashmir Constitution and Jammu and Kashmir Representation of the People Act, 1957. As far as delimitation of Lok Sabha seats is concerned, the last Delimitation Commission of 2002 was not entrusted with this task. Hence, J&K parliamentary seats remain as delimited on the basis of the 1971 Census.

- This month, the Union government scrapped the state's special status and turned J&K into a Union Territory.
- Under this law, delimitation of Lok Sabha and Assembly seats in J&K UT will be as per the provisions of the Indian Constitution.



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- The Act also states that in the next delimitation exercise, which is expected to kickstart soon, the number of Assembly seats will increase from 107 to 114. The increase in seats is expected to benefit Jammu region.

Chief of defence staff

What is the office of the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS)?

- The CDS is a high military office that oversees and coordinates the working of the three Services, and offers seamless tri-service views and single-point advice to the Executive (in India's case, to the Prime Minister) on long-term defence planning and management, including manpower, equipment and strategy, and above all, "jointmanship" in operations.
- In most democracies, the CDS is seen as being above inter-Service rivalries and the immediate operational preoccupations of the individual military chiefs. The role of the CDS becomes critical in times of conflict..
- He is the most senior military officer and military adviser to the President, and his remit extends to the National Security Council, the Homeland Security Council, and the Defence Secretary

So, why had India not appointed a CDS until now?

- India has had a feeble equivalent known as the Chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee (CoSC); but this is a toothless office, given the manner in which it is structured.
- The seniormost among the three Service Chiefs is appointed to head the CoSC, an office that lapses with the incumbent's retirement.
- The current Chairman CoSC is Air Chief Marshal Birender Singh Dhanoa, who succeeded the former Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Sunil Lanba on May 31. When ACM Dhanoa retires at the end of September 2019, he would have served as Chairman CoSC for a mere four months.



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Early proposal

- The first proposal for a CDS came from the 2000 Kargil Review Committee (KRC), which called for a reorganisation of the “entire gamut of national security management and apex decision-making and structure and interface between the Ministry of Defence and the Armed Forces Headquarters”.
- The Group of Ministers Task Force that studied the KRC Report and recommendations, proposed to the Cabinet Committee on Security that a CDS, who would be five-star officer, be created.
- In preparation for the post, the government created the Integrated Defence Staff (IDS) in late 2002, which was to eventually serve as the CDS’s Secretariat.
- However, over the past 17 years, this has remained yet another nebulous department within the military establishment.

But what happened to the proposal?

- No consensus emerged among the Services, with the IAF especially opposed to such a move.
- The Congress, then in opposition, was against the idea of concentrating too much military power in the CDS’s post.
- The Ministry of Defence (MoD) too, opposed it subtly for the same reasons, and because it could disrupt civil-military ties in the latter’s favour.

What is the case for having a CDS?

- Although the KRC did not directly recommend a CDS — that came from the GoM — it underlined the need for more coordination among the three Services, which was poor in the initial weeks of the Kargil conflict.



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- The KRC Report pointed out that India is the only major democracy where the Armed Forces Headquarters is outside the apex governmental structure.
- It observed that Service Chiefs devote most of their time to their operational roles, “often resulting in negative results”.
- Long-term defence planning suffers as day-to-day priorities dominate.
- Also, the Prime Minister and Defence Minister do not have the benefit of the views and expertise of military commanders, in order to ensure that higher level defence management decisions are more consensual and broadbased.

- The CDS is also seen as being vital to the creation of “theatre commands”, integrating tri-service assets and personnel like in the US military.

And what are the arguments against?

- Theoretically, the appointment of a CDS is long overdue, but there appears to be no clear blueprint for the office to ensure its effectiveness.
- India’s political establishment is seen as being largely ignorant of, or at best indifferent towards, security matters, and hence incapable of ensuring that a CDS works.

Who at present advises India’s Prime Minister on military matters?

- In effect it is the National Security Adviser.
- This has been especially so after the Defence Planning Committee was created in 2018, with NSA Ajit Doval as its chairman, and the foreign, defence, and expenditure secretaries, and the three Service Chiefs as members.



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BASIC group

Why in news?

The BASIC countries -- a grouping of Brazil, South Africa, India and China -- held their 28th Ministerial meeting on Climate Change between August 14 and August 16 in Sao Paulo, Brazil. India was represented by Union Minister for Environment, Forest and Climate Change Prakash Javadekar, who underlined the importance of the grouping in "making the (2015) Paris (climate) Agreement accepted by all countries in its true letter and spirit".

Who are the BASIC, and what is the significance of the grouping?

- The BASIC group was formed as the result of an agreement signed by the four countries on November 28, 2009.
- The signatory nations, all recently industrialised, committed to acting together at the upcoming United Nations Climate Change Conference, commonly known as the Copenhagen Summit, scheduled in Copenhagen, Denmark from December 7-18 of that year.
- These nations have a broadly common position on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and raising the massive funds that are needed to fight climate change.
- The BASIC countries constituted one of the parties in the Copenhagen Accord reached with the US-led grouping; the Accord, was, however, not legally binding.

Relevance

- The BASIC group wields considerable heft purely because of the size of the economies and populations of the member countries.
- China, India, and Brazil are the world's second, fifth, and ninth-largest economies. And as Javadekar said in Sao Paulo this week, "Brazil, South Africa, India and China put together has one-third of the world's geographical area and nearly 40% of the world's population, and when we unitedly speak in one voice this shows our determination."



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- BASIC nations -- expressed their concern about climate change and its adverse effects, and reaffirmed their commitment to the successful implementation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), its Kyoto Protocol and its Paris Agreement, based on the recognition of the needs and special circumstances of developing countries and in accordance with the principles of Equity and Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC), in the light of different national circumstances.

Role in fighting climate change

- BASIC is one of several groups of nations working together to fight climate change and carry out negotiations within the UNFCCC.
- Other than BASIC, there are the Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), the group of countries of Central Asia, Caucasus, Albania and Moldova (CACAM), the Cartagena Dialogue, the Independent Alliance of Latin America and the Caribbean (AILAC), and the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of our America (ALBA in Spanish), etc.
- There are also the Group of 77 developing countries, the African Group, the Arab States, the Environmental Integrity Group, the Least Developed Countries the Small Island Developing States, etc.

Parker solar probe

Why in news?

- On August 12, NASA's Parker Solar Probe completed a year in service.

About

- It is part of NASA's "Living With a Star" programme that explores different aspects of the Sun-Earth system.
- The probe seeks to gather information about the Sun's atmosphere and NASA says that it "will revolutionise our understanding of the Sun".
- It is also the closest a human-made object has ever gone to the Sun.



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Aim of mission

- The mission's central aim is to trace how energy and heat move through the Sun's corona and to study the source of the solar wind's acceleration.
- The mission is likely to last for seven years during which it will complete 24 orbits.