Note on Retaining Intra-State Delimitation While Preserving Each State's Share of Lok Sabha Representation

The Union Government deserves genuine commendation for the **Constitution (One Hundred and Thirty-Second Amendment) Bill, 2026**. By proposing a uniform 50% increase in seats while preserving existing inter-state proportions until 2051, the government has responded sensitively to federal concerns, cleared the way for women's reservation, and ensured that States which successfully stabilised their populations are not penalised with a loss of parliamentary representation.

However, India's delimitation exercise must distinguish between two questions: ***how many seats each State receives in Parliament, and how those seats are distributed among constituencies within the State.*** There is a genuine federal case for freezing the relative allocation of seats between States until 2051 and a uniform 50% increase in seats, while preserving existing inter-state proportions, seeks to address this concern. But, there is no comparable justification for freezing constituency boundaries within States and doing so would rather disconnect representation from changing demographics and leave growing populations in urban areas under-represented for decades.

India is in the process of rapid urbanization in the next three decades. Urban share of our population stood at 27.81% in 2001, and increased to 31.16% in 2011. Since then, urban growth has continued and people are moving to cities, towns and peri-urban settlements, but electoral boundaries have not kept pace.

The present boundaries of Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha constituencies are based on 2001 census data. According to the 2001 census, India's urban population share was 27.81%. That means the urban share of Lok Sabha seats at present is 151. In reality many constituencies have a mix of rural and urban population. However, a calculation based on census data gives us the weightage urban voters get in political representation. Translated to a Lok Sabha strength of 850, urban share of representation based on 2001 census is 236. The urban population as per 2011 census is 31.16%. If the delimitation after the enactment of the 132nd Amendment is carried out on the basis of the 2011 census, the urban representation would be 265. However, the estimates

Flat No. B-106, Pasha Court, Beside Tribhuvan Das Jewellers, Somajiguda, Hyderabad – 500 082
Tel: 91-40- 23419949; email: drjploksatta@gmail.com, jp@fdrindia.org, web: www.fdrindia.org

of MOHUD indicate that the urban population in 2026 is about 36%. **The urban representation now should therefore be 306 seats out of 850.**

Year / Scenario	Urban population share	Actual estimated urban representation	Representation urban areas are entitled to in proportion to the population	Representation deficit
2011 (existing delimitation; 543 seats)	31.16%	151 (out of 543)	169 (out of 543)	18
2026 (2011 boundaries retained)	~36%	265 (out of 850)	306 (out of 850)	**41**
2050 (lower-end projection; boundaries frozen)	50%	265 (out of 850)	425 (out of 850)	**160**
2050 (upper-end projection; boundaries frozen)	57%	265 (out of 850)	485 (out of 850)	**220**

Many countries rapidly urbanised after reaching middle income status. Our economy is growing at about 7%. By 2050 our urban population share will increase to 50 to 57% by various estimates. The share of urban representation (out of 850 seats), as per 2050 population projections, should be between **425** (at 50%) and **485** (at 57%). That means if the delimitation is carried out based on 2011 census data, and constituency boundaries are frozen until 2051 after the delimitation, the urban areas would be underrepresented by 160 to 220 seats by the year 2050. Similarly urban areas would be grossly underrepresented in Vidhan Sabhas in every state if regular delimitation does not take place every decade based on census data while freezing the number of seats allocated to each state.

Parameter	Lower-end projection	Upper-end projection
Projected urban population share in 2050	50%	58%
Corresponding representation required (out of 850)	425	485
Representation based on 2011 Census (frozen)	265	265
Projected shortfall in representation	**160 seats**	**220 seats**

Economic growth, urbanisation and modernisation go together. As the economy grows, the younger, more educated, skilled and productive population will migrate to urban areas rapidly. Such voters are less likely to be influenced by the inducements of money and gifts for voting. Urban voters are also more likely to value the long-term collective public goods like infrastructure, basic amenities, education and healthcare rather than short-term individual welfare. Most importantly, urban voters are less likely to be influenced by primordial loyalties like caste, region, religion etc in their voting behaviour. Urban voters are also more likely to hold the administration to account in the delivery of public services. Therefore giving weightage to urban areas in proportion to the population will make our democracy more healthy, rational and robust.

Delimitation of Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha constituencies within a state after every decennial census while freezing the number of seats allocated to each state is both necessary and possible. Freezing the number of seats allocated is a federal decision for larger national goals. Delimitation of constituencies within a state based on rural and urban population shares after each census is about giving representation to urban areas a fair representation. Such delimitation every decade within a state while freezing the number of seats would strengthen our democracy, people's participation, accountability and quality of public service delivery.

Our position, therefore, is:

1. **Use the latest published Census figures available at the time of delimitation, as far as practicable, rather than automatically relying on the 2011 Census.**

2. **Preserve the freeze on inter-State allocation of Lok Sabha seats until 2051, ensuring that every State retains its existing relative share of parliamentary representation.**
3. **Restore intra-State delimitation of Lok Sabha and Legislative Assembly constituencies, based on the latest published Census figures, while retaining the freeze on the total number of seats allocated to each State.**

The Two Problems with the Proposed Framework

1. **Fixing the population reference to the commencement date**

The 132nd Amendment Bill amends Articles 81(3) and 170(2) to use the latest published Census figures available on the date the Amendment Act commences. Section 2(e) of the Delimitation (Second) Bill, 2026 similarly ties the definition of "latest census figures" to the Act's commencement date. This is narrower even than the April 2026 draft, which referred to the date on which the Commission was constituted.

The Union MOHUD estimates that our urban population now is about 36%. Relying on the 2011 census for the current delimitation exercise means that the urban representation would be 265. However, the estimates of MOHUD indicate that the urban population in 2026 is about 36%. The urban representation now should therefore be 306 seats out of 850. This means a deficit of 41 Lok Sabha seats. Hence, with the existing technology and digitisation, it should be easy to utilise the 2026 census data for the current delimitation exercise.

Proposed change: Replace the commencement-date reference with a dynamic formulation, ***"The population as ascertained at the last preceding Census of which the relevant figures have been published at the time of delimitation."***

2. **Freezing intra-state delimitation until 2051**

Articles 82 and 170(3) originally provided for readjustment "upon the completion of each Census". The existing freeze covers two distinct matters:

- The allocation of seats between States.
- The division of each State into territorial constituencies.

The Draft 132nd Amendment Bill extends the freeze on both until 2051 and compounds this by replacing the provision for constituting a Delimitation Commission "from time to time" with a one-time Commission constituted after the Act commences. Together, these changes remove the constitutional basis for periodic intra-state readjustment.

Proposed Legislative Changes

Provision	Proposed change
Article 81(3)	Use the last preceding census whose relevant figures have been published at the time of delimitation for intra-state constituency boundaries.
Article 82, third proviso	Retain the 2051 freeze on inter-state seat allocation, but remove the freeze on the division of States into territorial constituencies.
Article 170(3), third proviso	Retain the freeze on the total number of Assembly seats in each State, but remove the freeze on internal constituency boundaries.
Delimitation (Second) Bill, Section 2(e)	Replace the commencement-date definition of latest census figures with a dynamic reference to the latest published Census.

Conclusion

India's demographic landscape will change significantly over the next 25 years. Cities will expand, new urban centres will emerge, and existing metropolitan regions will absorb millions of people. Electoral institutions must be able to respond to these changes. Our democracy has the potential to make public-spirited, rational and competent leaders more electable. We must do everything possible to realise this potential and create a political system that rewards good governance, sound policies and administrative competence. Ensuring fair representation for the citizens of our towns and cities is a modest but essential step towards achieving that goal.

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