

Formation of new districts

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Manifest Pedagogy:

India's governance system is divided into three levels: the centre, the state, and the districts. When it comes to service delivery, smaller districts are unquestionably superior. However, the ability to address administrative and governance problems through the creation of new districts is always constrained. The state governments must concentrate on giving their respective agencies sufficient authority to address administrative and governance issues. This can deliver administration to citizen's doors without requiring any extra expenditure for infrastructure development.

In News: West Bengal Chief Minister has announced that the state would get seven new districts, raising the total number of districts to 3

Placing it in Syllabus: Polity and Governance

Static Dimensions

- Status of district creation in India
- Procedure for creation or scrapping districts, or changing their boundaries

Current Dimensions

- Why have these districts been created?
- Significance of creation of new districts
- Issues with creation of new districts

Content

Why have these districts been created?

- States keep creating new districts from time to time, generally because smaller units would make governance easier and would benefit the people by bringing the

government and the administration closer to them, and making them more accessible.

- Sometimes, the decision to create a new district is driven by local demands.

As per Census 2011 figures, almost **4 million people** lived in each of West Bengal's 23 districts on average, among the highest in the country.

Status of District creation in India

- The **2001 Census recorded 593 districts, which went up to 640 in 2011**. India currently has more than **775 districts**.
- **Uttar Pradesh has the most districts (75)** in the country, followed by Madhya Pradesh (52).
- Goa, by contrast, has only **2** districts.
- However, the number of districts in a state is not always a function of the area of the state, or of its population.
 - West Bengal, for example, has **42 Lok Sabha MPs but only 30 districts** even after the addition of the 7 new districts, and Andhra Pradesh, even after the recent doubling of the number of districts to 26, has **only 25 Lok Sabha seats**.
 - Tamil Nadu, which has 39 MPs in Lok Sabha (after only Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Bihar, and West Bengal) has 38 districts.
- In general, the largest districts in India by area cover sparsely populated areas for example, Kachchh in Gujarat, and Jaisalmer, Bikaner, Barmer, and Jodhpur in Rajasthan.

Procedure for creation or scrapping districts, or changing their boundaries

- The power lies with the **state governments**, who can pass a law in the Assembly or simply issue an order and

notify it in the gazette.

- The Centre does not have a say in the matter.
- Many States prefer the executive route by simply issuing a notification in the official gazette.
- The central government does play a role, however, when a change of name of a district or railway station is contemplated.
 - The **Home Ministry** comes into the picture in such a scenario.
 - The request of the state government in this regard is sent to several central government departments before a no-objection certificate (NoC) is issued.
 - The State government's request is sent to other departments and agencies such as the **Ministry of Earth Sciences, Intelligence Bureau, Department of Posts, Geographical Survey of India Sciences and the Railway Ministry** seeking clearance. A NoC may be issued after examining their replies.

Significance of creation of new districts

- **Governance**— Creation of new districts can lead to better administration and governance.
 - Better implementation of government schemes, proper fund utilisation, enhanced people coverage of schemes.
- **Catering to increased population**-As population is increasing , the new districts can ensure better service delivery for the increased population.
- **Bringing administration closer to the people.**
 - Eg- Before the bifurcation of the Amravati district, the farthest taluka was around 150 km from the district headquarters.
- **Job Creation**— It will give a boost to employment opportunities indirectly. Government tender and associated employment for locals, new shops and services near government buildings. Eg- Amaravati capital.

- **More District centric** schemes and localised solutions to cater to the problems specific to the region.

Issues with creation of new districts

- **Costly and duplication of efforts**– More financial and human resources needed to manage new districts.
- **No guarantee for better governance and administration.**
 - The 2nd Administrative Reforms Commission stated that the political gains from forming a new district are a “minor dividend” and not the major one.
- **Politically motivated move**– new districts containing a support base of the ruling party can increase and will be advantageous for the party.
- **Too small districts**– can lead to underutilisation of resources.
- **Increased distance**-In some cases, the district headquarters may become more distant and difficult to access.
- **Tribal rights**– Bifurcation of areas with tribal populations is a violation of tribal rights.

Way Forward

- The Centre may prescribe certain criteria for the formation of a new district.
 - For example, the Centre may release a guideline that contains the minimum area of the district, its population.
- Greater devolution of powers and responsibilities to local government by the state.
 - Timely formation of SFCs (State Finance Commission) and allocating funds properly.
 - Widening their tax base and providing access to the Capital market to raise funds.
 - State Governments should provide local bodies with the power to recruit personnel to fulfil their

functions properly.

- States may conduct special camps, frequent field visits from officials to fill the gaps in administration and governance.
- The division of districts must be carried out after wide-ranging and meaningful public discussion.

Mould your thoughts

1. "Smaller administrative units will bring better administration, transparency, and smoother and more effective delivery of welfare". Discuss (250 words)

Approach to the answer

- Introduction about creation of new districts.
- Why is there a demand for smaller administrative units?
- Significance of creation of new districts
- Issues with creation of new districts
- Way Forward and conclusion.