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DELIMITATION DEBATE - SEAT ALLOCATION, FEDERALISM, AND THE 2027 CENSUS

- Delimitation is the process of fixing the number of seats and redrawing the boundaries of territorial constituencies for the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies, based on population data from the latest Census. It involves two distinct exercises:
 - Reallocation of seats among States and Union Territories based on their population share.
 - Redrawing of constituency boundaries within each State.
- The exercise is carried out by an independent Delimitation Commission, whose orders have the force of law and cannot be challenged in court.
- **Constitutional Provisions**
 - **Article 81:** Deals with the composition of the Lok Sabha and requires that seats be allocated among States, "so far as practicable," on the basis of a national average population per seat.
 - **Article 82:** Provides for readjustment of seats and constituency boundaries after every Census.
- The maximum number of Lok Sabha seats permitted by the Constitution is 550.

The Freeze on Seat Reallocation

- The last time Lok Sabha seats were reallocated among States was in 1973, based on the 1971 Census. That ratio continues to apply today.
- On two occasions, in 1976 and 2001, Parliament deliberately froze the reallocation of seats among States. The freeze was extended until the first Census after 2026.
- The last delimitation exercise, set up in July 2002 after the 2001 Census, only redrew constituencies within States without altering the seat share of individual States.
- Its recommendations were implemented in 2008, and the 2009 Lok Sabha elections were held on the newly drawn constituencies.

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The Central Tension: Federalism vs Democracy

- Article 81 requires seats to be allocated among States "so far as practicable" on the basis of a national average. This deliberate flexibility allows for a balance between two principles that can pull in opposite directions:
 - **Federalism:** The representation of States as units of the Union, which argues against penalising States for successful population control.
 - **Democracy:** The principle of one person, one vote, one value, which argues that every vote should carry equal weight regardless of where it is cast.
- Resolving this tension is the central challenge of the delimitation debate.

The Problem of Gerrymandering

- Equal numbers of voters per constituency do not by themselves guarantee equal value for every vote.
 - The way voters are grouped can dramatically affect electoral outcomes. This manipulation of boundaries is called gerrymandering.
 - Consider a simple illustration. Suppose there are 50 voters, Party A has 20 supporters and Party B has 30, spread across five constituencies of 10 voters each.
 - **Fair distribution:** Voters are distributed evenly, and the result broadly reflects the overall vote share, with each party winning seats roughly in proportion to its support.
 - **Cracking:** Party A's voters are spread thinly across all constituencies. Despite holding 40% of the total vote, Party A may fail to win even a single seat, leaving 40% of voters without representation.
 - **Packing:** Party B's voters are heavily concentrated in a few constituencies. Party B wins those seats by huge margins but wastes votes elsewhere, allowing Party A to win more seats overall despite having fewer supporters.
 - This demonstrates that the drawing of constituency boundaries can profoundly shape democratic representation, independent of population equality.
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BANKERS' BOOKS EVIDENCE BILL, 2026: MODERNISING LAW, MISSING SAFEGUARDS

Recently, the Lok Sabha passed the **Bankers' Books Evidence Bill, 2026**, aiming to overhaul the colonial-era **Bankers' Books Evidence Act, 1891**.

While legal experts have welcomed this technological update, they have flagged concerns over data privacy and the absence of robust digital safeguards.

Why the Old Law Needed Replacement?

- The 135-year-old Act allowed **certified copies of bank records** to be used as evidence in court, sparing bank officials the burden of physically producing original ledgers each time.
- However, the law was framed when banking records were predominantly maintained in physical form.
- With the growth of digital banking, bank records today are increasingly created, stored, and maintained using modern technology — necessitating a modernised legal framework.

Key Change: Expanded Definition of "Bankers' Books"

- **Old law:** Defined bankers' books narrowly as records "kept in written form or stored in a micro film, magnetic tape or in any other form of mechanical or electronic data retrieval mechanism."
- **2026 Bill:** Recognises records stored in **electronic or digital form**, whether onsite, offsite, or in virtual/cloud locations — bringing the law in line with contemporary banking practices.

Standardising Digital Evidence

- To ensure courts can trust digital records, the Bill introduces specific certificate formats and conditions for presenting such evidence.
- Experts compared this to the **Section 63 certificate** required for electronic evidence under the **Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam**, calling it a major improvement — it provides a defined format and undertakings so courts can be satisfied of a copy's genuineness.

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Clarifying "Special Cause"

- Under the 1891 Act, bank officers could not be compelled to produce records or appear as witnesses in cases where the bank wasn't a party — unless a court ordered it for "**special cause**," a term the old Act **never defined**.
- The 2026 Bill defines "special cause" as situations where:
 - The accuracy of the record is doubtful;
 - Regular record-keeping has been interrupted;
 - The bank disobeys an inspection order.
- Analysts noted this will streamline commercial litigation, such as cheque bounce cases, since bank officials won't be dragged into court unnecessarily, and electronic records can be directly admitted as evidence — reducing case lifespans.

Concern Over Police Powers

- **Section 11** of the Bill allows court orders compelling production of bank records for investigations to be treated as orders from an officer not below the rank of Superintendent of Police (SP).
- This is not a new power — Section 8 of the 1891 Act contained an identical provision. Experts called concerns over this a "red herring."
- However, others pointed out that since records are now electronic, they can be obtained and shared far more easily (even via phone), raising the risk of data leaks and privacy breaches — unlike physical books, which were harder to copy or share.
- They suggested such access should require court authorisation.

Missed Opportunities: Data Protection Gaps

- **No safeguards like hash values:** The Bill should have incorporated **hash values** — a unique digital fingerprint verifying that an electronic file hasn't been tampered with — to preserve evidence integrity, since lawyers and judges currently struggle to prove or disprove digital documents.
 - **No data protection framework:** Experts questioned whether Indian banks are prepared for data leaks and manipulation, noting the Bill doesn't address data protection at all.
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WHAT IS PHULKARI?



Several years after Punjab's traditional embroidery, Phulkari, secured the coveted Geographical Indication (GI) tag, the craftspersons who keep the centuries-old practice alive continue to struggle for recognition and a sustainable livelihood.

- Phulkari, meaning “**flower work**,” is a **traditional embroidery art of Punjab**.
- There are various theories about the origin of phulkari.
- **Some believe this embroidery dates back to the 7th century CE**, while others suggest it **originated from Iran**, where it was **known as Gulkari**.
- However, **distinct styles** of phulkari have been identified, making it **uniquely Punjabi**.
- References to phulkari can be found in ancient texts, folk legends, and literature, with the **earliest mention in the 18th-century Punjabi literature**.
- It received a **Geographical Indication (GI) tag** in 2010.

Features:

- It's an **amalgam of cotton and silk**.
- The **cloth** used is usually **hand-woven thick cotton**, called ‘**khadder**’. While the **threads are thin, lustrous, and breakable silk**, called ‘**pat**’.
- The **cloth** is usually **dyed red**, but can be **white, grey, or black**
- And the treads are a myriad of colors, ranging from the rich dark pink to soothing off-whites.
- The stitch is intricate, small, and completely fills the cloth. The stitch can be vertical, horizontal, or diagonal to create the shadow effect.
- Phulkari embroidery makes use of the **least complicated patterns** to create **extremely intriguing designs**.

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- The **designs and patterns** can vary from **geometrical figures to flowers to local fauna**. Peacocks, elephants, birds, and camels appear frequently.
- Phulkari's product range includes embroidered chaddars, dupattas, and stoles, traditionally worn by brides or for ceremonies.

E-SAMUDRA PLATFORM



Recently, the Union Minister for Ports, Shipping and Waterways inaugurated the E-Samudra platform.

- It is a **comprehensive digital platform**, making maritime governance simpler, more transparent and more stakeholder-centric.
- It is an initiative by the **Directorate General of Shipping**, is driving a digital revolution in maritime governance.
- This comprehensive e-governance solution **streamlines shipping and seafarer operations**, automates administrative processes, and enhances compliance monitoring.
- It is aimed at **transforming maritime governance** by bringing services for seafarers, shipping companies, ports and other stakeholders **under a single digital window**.
- It **transforms maritime administration** from a physical office-based model into an integrated digital ecosystem. It represents a transition towards Digital First and Faceless Governance
- It is part of a broader **effort to make maritime administration more transparent**, technology-driven and accessible while strengthening the safety, security and welfare of India's growing seafarer workforce.

It will bring maritime services into a single digital window with end-to-end workflows, online payments, **real-time tracking and digitally issued certificates**.

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KEY FACTS ABOUT MITHUN



- The Mithun, or gayal, is a heavily built, semi-domesticated bovine species.
- Scientific Name: *Bos frontalis*
- Mithun is believed to have originated more than 8000 years ago and is **considered** to be a **descendent of wild Indian gaur, or bison**.
- It is also known as the ‘**cattle of the mountain**’.
- **Distribution:**
 - The highest concentration of mithuns in the world is spread over the **North Eastern (NE) region of India**, with **Arunachal Pradesh** having the **highest population**.
 - It is also found in **China** and **parts of Southeast Asia**,, Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Bhutan.
 - The geographic zone is covered with **tropical evergreen rain forests**.
 - It is the **state animal of Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland**.
 - The ‘**Soulung**’ festival is observed annually by the **Adi tribes of Arunachal Pradesh to commemorate the birth and arrival of Mithun** on this earth.
- **Features:**
 - It appears somewhat **similar to that of Gaur** but are distinctly **smaller in size**.
 - The characteristic feature lies in the **head**, which has a **well-developed, broad frontal bone with a flat-shaped face**.
 - From the front view, it **appears like an inverted triangle** from where **two horns emerge from the lateral sides**.
 - **Horn colour** varies from **whitish yellow to salty black** in most animals.
 - The **skin color** of the head and body is **blackish-brown** in both sexes, and the **forehead** is **creamy white or yellowish** in color.

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- The other distinguishing features are a small and double dewlap and white stockings.
- They move in **small groups** with one or two males and several females and calves.
- **Conservation Status:**
 - IUCN Red List: **Vulnerable**

What is Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD)?

- It is a severe, highly **contagious viral disease** that **affects all cloven-hoofed animals**, including cattle, sheep, goats, camelids, deer, and pigs.
 - Cloven-hoofed animals are those with divided hooves. It does not affect horses or zebras.
 - **Cause:** It is caused by an **Aphthovirus** of the family Picornaviridae.
 - It is a **transboundary animal disease (TAD)** that deeply affects the production of livestock and disrupts regional and international trade in animals and animal products.
 - **Intensively reared animals** are **more susceptible** to the disease than traditional breeds.
 - FMD is a disease of animals, not humans, and is a **different disease than hand, foot, and mouth disease** which is **common in young children**.
 - FMD is **not transmitted to humans by eating affected meat**.
 - **Transmission:**
 - The virus is transmitted through **direct contact** between healthy and infected animals.
 - **Indirect contact with contaminated objects** (fomites) such as vehicles, clothing, footwear, and bedding can also spread FMDV.
 - Additionally, **consuming contaminated feed or milk** can transmit the virus as well as through **respiratory aerosols**.
 - **Treatment: Vaccination** is the only effective preventive measure against FMD.
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MYOGLOBIN



- It is a **small protein** that accounts for about 2% of total muscle protein.
- It is **found predominantly in striated muscle tissue**, namely skeletal muscle and cardiac muscle.
 - Specifically, it is in the **cytoplasm of cardiac myocytes** and the sarcoplasm of oxidative skeletal muscle fibers.
- It encodes a single polypeptide chain with one oxygen binding site.
- It is one of **the members of the globin superfamily**, which also includes hemoglobin. It often gets compared structurally and functionally to hemoglobin.
- **Composition:** It's made of **amino acids, iron** and other molecules that work together to hold onto oxygen.

Functions of Myoglobin:

- **Transports Oxygen:** It transports oxygen from the bloodstream to the muscles when they need it to convert stored energy into movements.
- It serves as a **sensitive indicator of cellular damage** when detected in urine or plasma.
- It serves as a **buffer of intracellular oxygen concentrations** and as an oxygen reservoir in muscle.
- **Enzymatic functions:** It is necessary for the decomposition of bioactive nitric oxide to nitrate. The removal of nitric oxide enhances mitochondrial respiration.
- **Remove reactive oxygen species:** It can do this by interacting with fatty acids.