

Supreme Court Rejects Andhra Pradesh, Telangana Delimitation Plea, Citing "Floodgates" Concern



The Supreme Court of India on Friday dismissed a petition seeking immediate delimitation of Assembly constituencies in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, cautioning that acceding to such a request would "open the floodgates" for similar demands from other states. A division bench comprising Justices Surya Kant and Joymalya Bagchi upheld the existing constitutional mandate that freezes delimitation until the first census conducted after 2026.

Delimitation is the process of redrawing the boundaries of Lok Sabha and Assembly constituencies to ensure that each constituency has a roughly equal population, thereby maintaining the principle of "one vote, one value." While typically carried out after every decennial census, a freeze on delimitation was imposed in 1976 and later extended until after the first census post-2026. This was primarily to avoid penalizing states that had successfully implemented population control measures, as their representation would otherwise decrease compared to states with higher population growth.

The petitioner, K. Purushottam Reddy had argued that the exclusion of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana from a recent delimitation exercise conducted for the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir was arbitrary and discriminatory. He contended that Section 26 of the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act of 2014, which facilitated the bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh, contemplated an increase in Assembly seats for both states from 175 to 225 for Andhra Pradesh and from 119 to 153 for Telangana. Reddy asserted that the citizens of these states had a "legitimate expectation" for such an exercise.

However, the Supreme Court firmly rejected this argument. The bench clarified that Jammu and Kashmir, having been reconstituted as a Union Territory, is governed by a different constitutional and statutory regime (Article 239A) compared to states like Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, which fall under Article 170. Article 170(3) explicitly bars any readjustment in the total number of seats in state legislative assemblies until after the first census conducted after the year 2026.

Justice Kant, writing for the bench, underscored the constitutional imperative for uniformity: "Granting such relief in contravention of the constitutional timeline provided under Article 170(3) of the Constitution would not only destabilize the uniform electoral framework envisaged by the Constitution but also blur the clear demarcation between constitutional prescription and political discretion." The Court concluded that the distinction drawn was "firmly anchored in the constitutional structure," and therefore, the exclusion of the two Telugu states from the delimitation notification was neither arbitrary nor discriminatory. This ruling reinforces the existing constitutional framework governing electoral boundaries across India until the stipulated period after 2026.