[**Delimitation report**](https://www.dawn.com/news/1689610/delimitation-report)

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AT long last, the final report of Kashmir’s three-member delimitation commission is out. The commission was appointed two years ago, and its report is based on the 2011 census figure of 12.5 million residents in Jammu & Kashmir. Published last week, on May 5, it holds absolutely no surprises. Indeed, this handpicked body has fully lived up to the expectations of those who appointed it.

The delimitation commission has allocated 43 seats to the Hindu-majority region of Jammu, and 47 to Muslim-majority Kashmir, increasing the total strength of seats to 90 from 83 but reducing Kashmiri representation by giving six seats to Jammu and adding only one to the Muslim-majority area.

According to the Hindustan Times, “For the first time, the panel reserved nine seats for scheduled tribes … reorganised some Lok Sabha constituencies while keeping their total number at five, renamed some assembly constituencies, and redrew some others. All Lok Sabha constituencies now comprise 18 assembly segments each. It also recommended that members be nominated from Kashmiri migrant communities, which primarily comprise Kashmiri Pandits who were displaced at the peak of militancy in the region in the 1990s. ‘It is ensured by the commission that every assembly constituency shall be contained entirely in one district and the lowest administrative units ie Patwar circles (and wards in Jammu Municipal Corporation) were not broken and were kept in a single assembly constituency,’ the panel said.”

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his deputy home minister, Amit Shah, repeatedly declared that elections to Kashmir’s assembly will be held only after the publication and implementation of the delimitation commission’s report. The commission has fulfilled the expectations of the prime minister and his deputy by increasing Jammu’s leverage. By purchasing the loyalties of some members of the assembly in Srinagar — and they are easily identifiable — Jammu will acquire a majority in the legislature.

The forthcoming developments will then fulfil Narendra Modi’s plan — a Hindu chief minister in Muslim-majority Kashmir — and thus complete the vicious process that was begun on Aug 5, 2019, to deprive the Kashmiris of their identity. It was on that date that Kashmir was robbed of its autonomy and the 71-year-old Hindutva plan of repealing Article 370 of India’s constitution was fulfilled.

In fact, it was Jawaharlal Nehru who had first started the process of the erosion of Kashmir’s autonomy once he had ousted Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah from the seat of premiership on Aug 8, 1953, and put the Kashmiri leader in prison for 11 long years — all in breach of his promises to the Kashmir people. Modi has torn apart the fig leaf that Nehru had devised.

The latest delimitation report has not gone down well with political parties. The Communist Party of India (Marxist) said, “The recommendations of the J&K Delimitation Commission are blatantly unjustified and illogical.” It said that the commission’s recommendations were “clearly politically motivated aimed at changing the demographic character and composition of J&K. These recommendations must therefore be rejected”. The party pointed out the disproportionate balance of six seats for Jammu and only one for the Kashmir Valley. “With 44 per cent of the population, Jammu will have 48 per cent of seats while Kashmir with 56 per cent of population will have only 52 per cent of the seats,” it said. New Delhi’s designs are very clear.

Significantly, all the major political parties of Kashmir have rejected the report of the Delimitation Commission. This is utterly unprecedented. Elections will now be held in these constituencies and the boundaries drawn accordingly. New Delhi’s well-known paid agents among Kashmiris politicians have preferred to keep silent rather than voice support for their paymasters in New Delhi.

The rejection by political parties was expressed in a joint statement in trenchant terms from the platform of the All Parties United Morcha that was formed following the recommendations. “Senior leaders of main opposition parties have jointly rejected the final report, which is highly partisan, motivated and against all basic norms of delimitation like contiguity, connectivity, population, physical features and public convenience and aspirations of the people of different areas.” The members of the commission had ignored the ground realities.

These parties are, however, in a bind. If they boycott the elections held under the report, they leave the field open to New Delhi’s hirelings. If they contest, they give legitimacy to the bogus report of the bogus delimitation commission. But the worst is yet to come as in all of India, there is a determined effort to muzzle the opposition.

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