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State Legislatures and Special Governance Arrangements

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State Legislatures and Special Governance Arrangements

State legislatures look a lot like Parliament, but they are not all the same. Some states have one House. Some have two. The Governor plays a special part. This lesson explains how state legislatures work, what a Legislative Council can and cannot do, how Union Territories are run, and how MPLADS lets MPs fund local works.

> **Bicameral states** Six: AP, Telangana, Bihar, Karnataka, Maharashtra, UP.
> **Council size** At most one-third of the Assembly, and at least 40 members.
> **Chairman** The Council elects its own. The Governor does not choose.
> **MPLADS** ₹5 crore per MP per year.

Unicameral: One House.

Bicameral: Two Houses.

Ordinance: A temporary law issued when the legislature is not sitting.

Administrator: The President's appointee who runs most Union Territories.

1 Chapter 1: One House or Two?

Must Know

Unicameral is the norm

- Most states have one House, the Legislative Assembly, or Vidhan Sabha.
- It makes state law.
- Voters elect it directly.

Bicameral is the exception

- Six states also have a Legislative Council, or Vidhan Parishad.
- They are **Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Bihar, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Uttar Pradesh**.
- The Council reviews bills the Assembly has passed and can suggest changes.
- That gives a second look at legislation.
- Exams test this exact list.

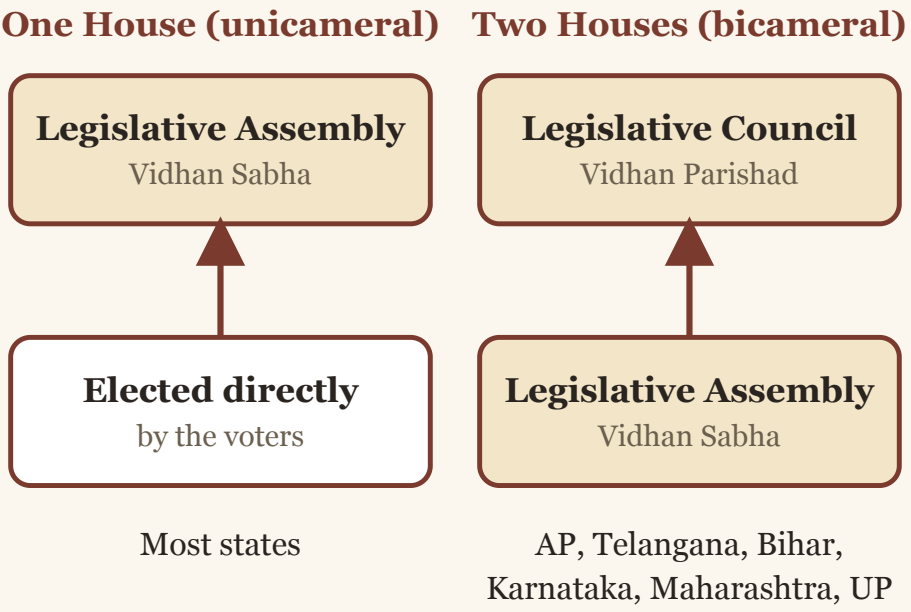
State	Council seats	Assembly seats
Uttar Pradesh	100	403
Maharashtra	78	288
Bihar	75	243
Karnataka	75	224
Andhra Pradesh	58	175
Telangana	40	119



Vidhana Soudha, Bengaluru, home of the Karnataka Assembly and Council. Photo: Moheen Reeyad, Wikimedia Commons, CC BY-SA 4.0.

Whose choice is it?

- The Constitution permits a Council. It never requires one.
- Article 169 lets a state add or remove its Council.
- The choice reflects each state’s history and politics.



Most states have only an Assembly. Six also have a Council that reviews its bills.

Remember: Six Councils: AP, Telangana, Bihar, Karnataka, Maharashtra, UP.

> **Quick check 1.** Every Indian state has a Legislative Council. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

2 Chapter 2: The Governor's Powers

Must Know

Veto and ordinance

- A Governor has veto and ordinance-making powers over state legislation.

- This broadly mirrors the President's role at the Union level.
- The Governor can withhold assent from a bill the Assembly passed.
- Under **Article 213**, the Governor can issue an **ordinance** when the legislature is not sitting.
- An ordinance has the force of an ordinary law.
- The legislature must approve it after it meets again, or it lapses.

Governor versus President

- The two roles are similar in structure.
- A Governor's powers are narrower in some respects.
- But they carry more discretion in others, such as reserving bills for the President.
- The Governor works with the Chief Minister.
- So the office is a real check within the state's own law-making, not just a ceremony.
- Read more: The Governor: Office, Powers and Immunities, State Legislature and the Governor and Speaker of the Legislative Assembly.

> **Quick check 2.** A Governor can issue an ordinance under Article 213 when the legislature is not in session. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

3 Chapter 3: Union Territories

Good to Know

Who runs them?

- Most Union Territories answer to an **Administrator** whom the President appoints.
- They have no full elected state government with a Chief Minister.

The exceptions

- Delhi and Puducherry have elected legislatures with real but limited law-making powers.
- Jammu and Kashmir, a Union Territory since 2019, also has an elected legislature.
- How much self-rule a Union Territory gets depends on its own constitutional status.
- No single rule fits every UT.

> **Quick check 3.** Every Union Territory is governed in the same way. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

4 Chapter 4: MPLADS

Good to Know

MPs recommend, the district delivers

- The Member of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme lets each MP recommend development works in their constituency.
- The government funds them directly. The MP does not spend personal money.
- Each MP gets **₹5 crore a year**, in two instalments of ₹2.5 crore.
- The money goes directly to the district authority.
- Unspent funds carry forward. They do not lapse at year end.
- The MP only recommends works, such as a school building or a local road.
- The **district authority** carries them out.
- The Centre funds the scheme.
- Read more: MPLADS: The MP Local Area Development Scheme.

The debate

- Supporters say MPLADS lets elected members answer real local needs.
- Critics say it blurs the line between a lawmaker's role and an executive's role.

Remember: MP recommends. District authority implements. Centre funds.

> **Quick check 4.** Under MPLADS, the MP sanctions and carries out the works personally. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

5 Chapter 5: The Legislative Council Rules

Great to Know

Size and members

- Under Article 171, a Council can have at most **one-third** of the Assembly's members.
- It must have at least **40** members.
- Candidates often guess "half the Assembly". That is wrong.
- Mostly, about one-third are elected by MLAs and one-third by local bodies.
- One-twelfth each come from graduates and teachers.
- The Governor nominates about one-sixth, from people with special knowledge or service.

Who fills a Legislative Council?

12 equal slices



Elected by MLAs
4 of 12, one-third

Elected by local bodies
4 of 12, one-third

Graduates
1 of 12

Teachers
1 of 12

Nominated by the Governor
2 of 12, one-sixth

4 + 4 + 1 + 1 + 2 = 12. The slices add up to the whole Council.

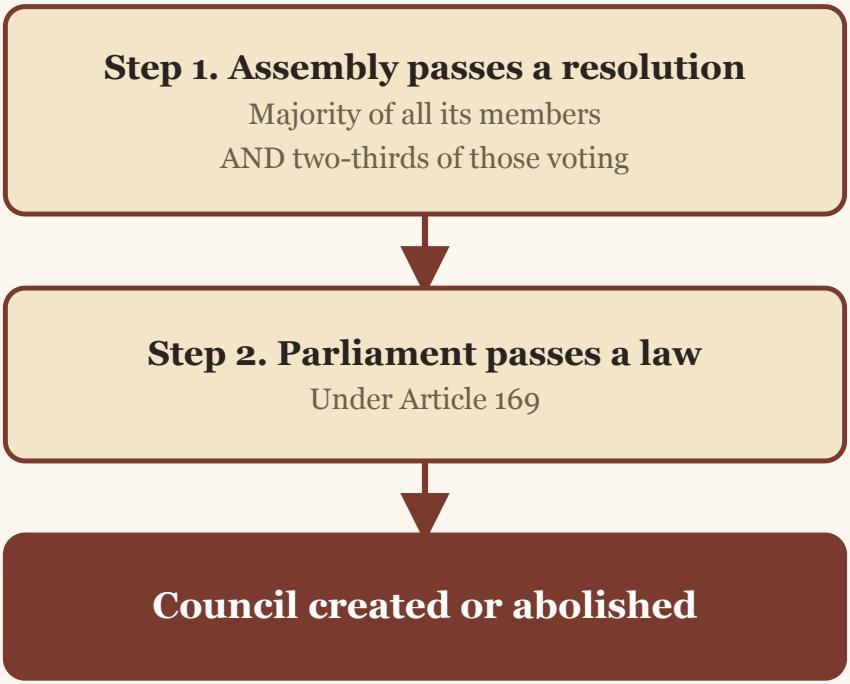
The Chairman

- The Council elects its own Chairman from its members.
- The Governor plays no part in choosing the Chairman.
- This is a frequently misremembered fact.

Creating or abolishing a Council

- A state cannot do this alone.
- Its Assembly must first pass a resolution by a special majority.

- Then Parliament must pass the law that gives effect to it.
- This is why only six states keep a Council.



Not a Constitution amendment under Article 368.

Two steps, in this order. A state cannot do it alone.

Quick check 5. A Legislative Council's size is capped at one-third of the Assembly's membership. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

> **Think it through: why would a state want a Council at all?**
> A Council adds a second look at bills and gives a seat to graduates, teachers and nominated experts. But it also costs money and can slow laws. So each state decides by its own history and politics.

6 Chapter 6: State and Union Compared

Great to Know

One blueprint

- State legislatures broadly mirror Parliament.
- An Assembly plays the Lok Sabha's part.
- In bicameral states, a Council plays a part like the Rajya Sabha's.

The real difference

- Parliament has exclusive power over Union List subjects.
- These include defence, foreign affairs and currency.
- No state legislature can touch them.
- This split is central to India's federal design.
- What each level can legislate on matters more for exams than which House is which.

Special provisions: the Article 371 family

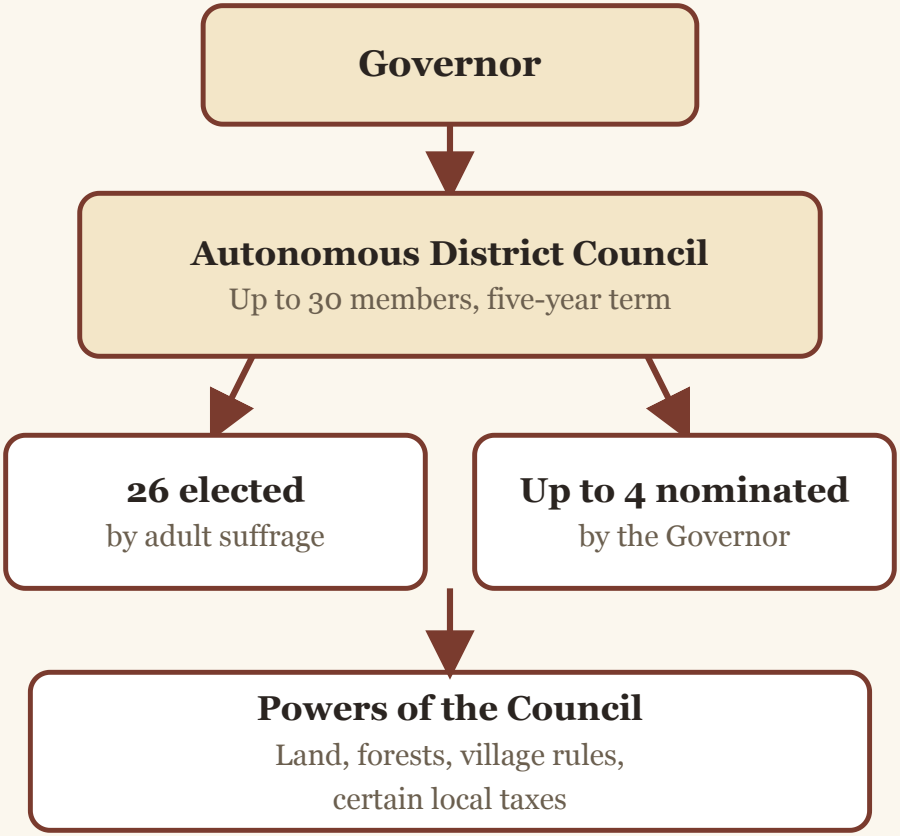
- Articles **371 to 371J** give some states special arrangements.
- Most protect tribal customs, backward regions or local balance.
- Each Article names its own state, so exams ask you to match them.

Article	State	Special provision
371	Maharashtra, Gujarat	Governor has a special duty to set up development boards for Vidarbha, Marathwada, Saurashtra and Kutch.
371A	Nagaland	Parliament's laws on Naga customary law and land do not apply unless the Assembly agrees.
371B	Assam	A committee of tribal-area MLAs advises on tribal affairs.
371C	Manipur	A committee of hill-area MLAs looks after hill areas.
371D, 371E	Andhra Pradesh, Telangana	Equal chances in jobs and education across regions. 371E allows a Central University.
371F	Sikkim	Assembly of at least 30 members. Governor has a special duty for peace and fair development.
371G	Mizoram	Parliament's laws on Mizo customary law and land do not apply unless the Assembly agrees.
371H	Arunachal Pradesh	Governor has a special duty for law and order.
371I	Goa	Assembly of at least 30 members.

Article	State	Special provision
371J	Karnataka	Special status for the Kalyana-Karnataka (old Hyderabad-Karnataka) region.

The Sixth Schedule: tribal self-rule

- The **Sixth Schedule** covers tribal areas in **Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram**.
- These areas are run by **Autonomous District Councils**.
- Each Council has up to 30 members. Of these, 26 are elected and up to 4 are nominated by the Governor.
- Councils make rules on land, forests and village matters. They can also collect certain local taxes.



Sixth Schedule areas are in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram.

7 Chapter 7: In the News, February 2026

Current Affairs

MPLADS interest rule

- In February 2026, the Ministry of Finance revised how interest earned on MPLADS funds is handled.
- Interest now goes to the Consolidated Fund of India.

- Earlier it was added back to the MPLADS account and could fund more local projects.

Why the scheme draws scrutiny

- The CAG has flagged uneven fund use, from 49% to 90% across MPs.
- The Second Administrative Reforms Commission argued MPLADS blurs the separation of powers.
- It gives lawmakers an executive role in choosing local projects.

> **Quick check 6.** In February 2026, interest earned on MPLADS funds was redirected to the Consolidated Fund of India. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

8 Previous Year Questions

Exam angle: real questions on this topic.

Quick Q&A

- **States with Councils?** Six.
- **Council size cap?** One-third of Assembly.
- **Minimum Council members?** 40.
- **MPLADS per MP?** ₹5 crore a year.
- **Ordinance Article?** 213.

Practice MCQs

1. What distinguishes a bicameral state legislature from a unicameral one?

A. A bicameral state has both a Legislative Assembly and a Legislative Council, while a unicameral state has only an Assembly

B. A bicameral state has no elected legislature at all

C. A unicameral state has two houses, while a bicameral state has only one

D. All Indian states are required to be bicameral

See answer ↓

2. How are Union Territories typically administered?

A. Union Territories have no administration of any kind

B. Through direct rule by the Supreme Court

C. Through an Administrator appointed by the President, rather than a state-style elected government

D. Through a hereditary ruler, similar to a princely state

See answer ↓

3. What does MPLADS (Member of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme) let each MP do?

A. Override decisions made by the Election Commission

B. Recommend development works in their constituency, funded through a dedicated allocation

C. Directly control the entire national budget

D. Appoint judges to the Supreme Court

See answer ↓

4. What does the variation in Union Territory administration illustrate about India's governance design?

A. Every Union Territory has identical governance with no variation at all

B. Union Territories always have more self-governance power than states

C. There is no variation at all in how Union Territories are governed

D. Uniform categories like 'state' and 'Union Territory' still allow for meaningfully different degrees of actual self-governance underneath

See answer ↓

5. Consider the following statements:

1. The Legislative Council of a State in India can be larger in size than half of the Legislative Assembly of that particular State.

2. The Governor of a State nominates the Chairman of Legislative Council of that particular State.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

A. 1 only

B. 2 only

C. Both 1 and 2

D. Neither 1 nor 2

See answer ↓

Answer Key

1. **A.** Most Indian states have a unicameral legislature. This means just a Legislative Assembly. A bicameral state also has a Legislative Council as an upper house. ↑ Q1
2. **C.** Union Territories are administered differently from states. They are typically administered through an Administrator. This Administrator is appointed by the President. ↑ Q2
3. **B.** MPLADS lets each MP do something specific. Each MP can recommend development works. These works happen in their constituency, funded through a dedicated allocation. ↑ Q3
4. **D.** The variation in Union Territory administration illustrates a broader pattern. Uniform categories like state and Union Territory still allow for real differences. These differences show up in the actual degree of self-governance underneath. ↑ Q4
5. **D.** The correct answer is **(d) Neither 1 nor 2**. Article 171 caps a Legislative Council's size at one-third of the Legislative Assembly's membership, not half or more — Statement 1 is false. The Council elects its own Chairman from among its members; the Governor does not nominate the Chairman — Statement 2 is false. Read more. ↑ Q5

Quick-check answers

1. **False.** ↑ 1
2. **True.** ↑ 2
3. **False.** ↑ 3
4. **False.** ↑ 4
5. **True.** ↑ 5
6. **True.** ↑ 6

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