

QS WORLD UNIVERSITY RANKINGS



The Indian Institute of Management-Kozhikode (IIM-K) has achieved a global milestone by breaking into the Top 100 of the prestigious QS World University Rankings by Subject 2026 for the first time.

- It is published annually by global higher education consultancy **Quacquarelli Symonds**.
- The QS rankings evaluate universities on several parameters, including academic reputation, overall score, employer reputation, and employment outcomes.
- It uses a **structured approach to assess** institutions across the globe. Each ranking is built on a set of measurements that help evaluate different aspects of university performance. These measurements are grouped as follows:
 - **Lens:**A collection of **indicators linked by a common theme**, such as research or employability.
 - **Five Lenses:** Research and Discovery, Employability and Outcomes, Global Engagement, Learning Experience, Sustainability.
 - **Indicator:**A specific area of performance, such as Citations per Faculty or Employer Reputation. Institutions are scored and ranked on each indicator, which contributes to their overall rank.
 - **Metric:**A detailed calculation within an indicator, used to generate precise scores.

Key Highlights of QS World University Rankings

- **India recorded 120 new entries** this year, placing it fourth globally for fresh appearances, behind only the US (287), China (181), and the UK (159).
- The country now holds the **fourth-largest presence** in these rankings by **institution count**, after the US, China, and the UK.
- Six Indian institutions now feature in the **global top 100 for computer science**, all improving from last year.



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- The **Indian Institute of Technology (ISM) Dhanbad** and the Indian Institute of Management Ahmedabad, both securing the country's highest global rank of 21.
- **IIT-ISM Dhanbad** has retained its stronghold in **mineral and mining engineering**.
- IIM Ahmedabad has broken into the top 25 globally in **business and management studies** as well as marketing.

PRISM-SG Portal



- **PRISM-SG (Portal for Rail-Road Inspection & Stages Management – Steel Girders)** Portal aimed at enhancing efficiency, transparency, and inter-agency **coordination in infrastructure development**.
- **Features:**
 - It has been developed to **digitise key approval and inspection** processes related to the construction of
 - **Road Over Bridges (ROBs)** and also includes **Quality Assurance Plan (QAP)**, Welding Procedure Specification Sheet (WPSS) and fabrication stage inspection of steel girders.
 - It enables **end-to-end online submission** of documents, scrutiny, raising and resolution of queries, approvals, scheduling of inspections, and uploading of inspection reports, supported by a complete audit trail and real-time monitoring.
 - It provides an integrated digital platform that brings together all key stakeholders, including **Road Owning Departments, Indian Railways, contractors, fabricators, and inspection agencies**.
- **Significance:**
 - It will help to **reduce the approval and inspection timeline** from approximately 12 months to about 3 to 4 months.
 - It will play a critical role in ensuring timely completion of RoBs and Railway Bridges, strengthening infrastructure delivery and enhancing connectivity across the country.

IMMIGRATION, VISA, FOREIGNERS REGISTRATION & TRACKING (LVFRT) SCHEME



Recently, the Union cabinet approved the continuation of the Immigration, Visa, Foreigners Registration & Tracking (IVFRT)

Scheme.

- The IVFRT platform is aimed at **integrating and streamlining immigration, visa issuance**, and foreigner registration processes in India through a secure, technology-driven framework.
- It was approved for a **period of five year from 2026 to 2031**.
- It was originally **approved in 2010**; the project has undergone multiple phases of expansion and extension.
- The latest approval comes in the backdrop of the recently **enacted Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025**,
- **Features of IVFRT Scheme:**
 - The scheme will **concentrate on three broad areas:**
 - Emerging technology innovations, transformation of core infrastructure and optimisation of technology-enabled service delivery
 - The scheme will **modernize the immigration and visa ecosystem** through adoption of emerging technologies, including mobile-based services and self-service kiosks for seamless and secure passenger movement.
 - It will upgrade and **expand core infrastructure** across **Immigration Posts, FRROs, and Data Centres** to build a resilient and scalable system nationwide.
 - It will **optimize technology and service delivery** by introducing unified digital platforms, revamping core application architecture, and strengthening network and deployment frameworks for improved efficiency and user experience.

UDAN SCHEME REVAMP - EXPANDING REGIONAL AIR CONNECTIVITY

- The **Ude Desh ka Aam Nagrik (UDAN)** scheme was launched in 2017 under the Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS) to enhance air connectivity to underserved and unserved regions.
- **Objectives**
 - Improve regional connectivity across Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities.
 - Make air travel affordable for common citizens.
 - Promote balanced regional development.
 - Enhance the infrastructure utilisation of unused and underutilised airports.
- **Key Features**
 - Airlines are selected through a **competitive bidding mechanism**.
 - 50% of seats are offered at a capped fare of around Rs. 2,500 per hour of flight.
 - Focus on connecting remote, hilly, and island regions.
- **Funding Mechanism**
 - Initially funded through a **Regional Connectivity Scheme levy** imposed on flights operating on major routes.
 - The levy subsidised airlines operating on regional routes.
- **Achievements of the Scheme**
 - Over 600 routes have been operationalised since launch.
 - More than 90 airports, including many previously unused airstrips, are revived.
 - Improved last-mile connectivity in remote areas such as the North-East and hilly regions.
- **Challenges**
 - Low route viability after subsidy withdrawal.
 - Limited passenger demand in certain regions.
 - Operational challenges such as infrastructure gaps and airline sustainability.
 - High discontinuation rate of routes after the subsidy period.

CONSTITUTIONAL ROADBLOCKS IN EXPANDING LOK SABHA TO 816 SEATS - I

The government has proposed increasing Lok Sabha seats from 543 to 816 — a 50% rise — based on the **2011 Census** (rather than the upcoming Census) to implement the **Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam (Women's Reservation Act), 2023**.

The proposal, being discussed with various political parties to build consensus, is likely to face significant legal and constitutional hurdles.

What Is Being Proposed?

- Lok Sabha seats to be increased from 543 to 816.
- 273 seats to be reserved for women (33% of 816).
- Delimitation to be based on the 2011 Census, not the upcoming Census.
- Existing proportional representation among states to be maintained.
- A similar increase proposed for state Assembly seats.

Why the 2011 Census?

- The Women's Reservation Act, 2023 links the implementation of the quota to delimitation, which in turn requires a fresh Census.
- By using the 2011 Census instead of waiting for a new one, the government aims to fast-track implementation while avoiding the politically sensitive issue of states with higher populations — largely in the north — gaining seats at the expense of southern states that have performed better on population control.

Constitutional Provisions Governing Lok Sabha Seat Allocation

- **Article 81** establishes the foundational principle of equal representation in the Lok Sabha through two key clauses:
 - **Article 81(2)(a)** — The ratio between the number of seats allotted to a state and its population must be, as far as practicable, the same for all states.
 - **Article 81(2)(b)** — Each state must be divided into constituencies such that the ratio between the population of each constituency and the number of seats allotted to it is, as far as practicable, uniform throughout the state.

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- Article 81 makes a single exception — **very small states** with a population not exceeding 6 million are allowed disproportionate representation to ensure they still receive adequate representation in the Lower House.
- **Article 82** mandates that upon the completion of each Census, both:
 - The allocation of Lok Sabha seats to states, and
 - The division of each state into territorial constituencies

The Delimitation Freeze: Why Lok Sabha Seats Have Been Unchanged Since 1971

- The current freeze on delimitation — meaning Lok Sabha seat allocation has remained unchanged since 1971 — is the result of two successive constitutional amendments:
 - **1976 Amendment** — Froze the definition of "last preceding census" in Articles 81 and 82 to mean the 1971 Census for the purpose of seat allocation among states. This freeze was set for 25 years.
 - **2001 Amendment** — Extended the freeze further, until the "relevant figures for the first census taken after the year 2026 have been published". The freeze will thus automatically expire once the current Census figures are released.
 - **Why Was the Freeze Introduced?**
 - The core reason was the fear of southern states losing political representation:
 - Southern states had stabilised their populations through effective family planning.
 - Several northern states, however, were experiencing rapid population growth.
 - Under a strictly population-based delimitation, southern states would have seen their relative share of Lok Sabha seats decline — effectively penalising them for their success in controlling population growth
 - The freeze was thus a political compromise to ensure that states were not disadvantaged for performing better on demographic indicators.
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CONSTITUTIONAL ROADBLOCKS IN EXPANDING LOK SABHA TO 816 SEATS - II

How Delimitation Will Proceed?

- If the government chooses not to extend the freeze, the next step would be Parliament passing a new Delimitation Act under Article 82.
- This is the established constitutional process:
 - Census conducted → figures published
 - Parliament passes a Delimitation Act
 - Central Government constitutes a Delimitation Commission
 - Commission demarcates boundaries of Parliamentary constituencies as per Act
- **The Last Delimitation Exercise**
 - As per Election Commission, the most recent delimitation of constituencies was conducted on the basis of 2001 Census figures under the Delimitation Act, 2002.
 - This was an **intra-state delimitation** — redrawing constituency boundaries within states — and is distinct from the inter-state seat allocation, which has remained frozen since 1976.

Legal Tests: The Constitutional Hurdles Ahead

- **The Core Constraint: Article 81**
 - Any delimitation exercise using the 2011 Census must comply with Article 81's "one person, one vote, one value" principle — ensuring each constituency has roughly equal population.
 - Unless Article 81 itself is amended, the Delimitation Commission cannot arbitrarily increase seats by 50% per state without being bound by this principle.
- **Two Possible Legal Routes**
 - **Route 1: Amend the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam**
 - If women's reservation is delinked from the next Census and delimitation by amending the Act itself, there would be no need for a Delimitation Commission — and reservation would automatically come into force.

- This is the simpler path.
- **Route 2: Amend Articles 81 and 82**
 - If the government proceeds with delimitation using 2011 data, it would need to amend Articles 81 and 82 — opening the door to judicial challenge on multiple grounds.
- **Constitutional Challenges**
 - **Violation of Right to Equality** — Amending Article 81(2)(a) to do away with the "one person, one vote" principle could be challenged as violating Article 14 (Right to Equality) and thereby the Basic Structure of the Constitution.
 - **Article 14's Reasonable Classification Test** — Even invoking positive discrimination under Article 14 would require proving that southern states need special protection based on backwardness — a standard India's legal system currently does not recognise for states with better development indicators.
 - **Delimitation Commission's Judicial Reviewability** — Any constitutional violations by the Commission can be challenged in court.
- **A Possible Way Out: The "Compensatory Principle"**
 - Experts suggests that since constitutional amendments are inevitable, Parliament could devise a "**compensatory principle**" to address the concerns of southern states — potentially offering them safeguards against losing relative representation.

THE TRANSGENDER PERSONS AMENDMENT BILL IS A FLAWED FIX

- One of the most contentious aspects of the Amendment Bill is its **narrowed definition** of a transgender person. By limiting recognition to specific socio-cultural identities such as hijra, kinner, and aravani, as well as biologically defined intersex variations, the Bill excludes individuals with fluid or non-heteronormative gender identities.
- This restrictive approach not only erases diversity within gender identities but also undermines lived realities of those who don't fit in rigid cultural or biological categories.



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- Furthermore, the removal of the right to **self-perceived gender identity**, previously recognized under the 2019 Act, marks a regressive shift.

Conceptual Confusion: Sex vs Gender

- A central flaw in the Bill lies in its conflation of sex identity and gender identity.
- By categorising male and female as gender identities rather than biological sex markers, the legislation demonstrates a lack of conceptual clarity.
- This confusion extends further in its treatment of intersex persons, who are biologically diverse, as part of the transgender category, which is primarily a **social and psychological identity**.
- It erases the distinct medical, legal, and social needs of intersex individuals, thereby limiting the scope of protections available to them.
- International bodies such as the United Nations and the World Health Organisation clearly distinguish between these categories, advocating for separate recognition and safeguards.
- The Bill's divergence from these standards risks **weakening** India's **alignment** with global **human rights** frameworks.

Conclusion

- The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Amendment Bill, 2026, despite its stated intent to strengthen protections, ultimately reinforces many of the **structural flaws** present in the 2019 Act.
 - By narrowing definitions, conflating distinct identities, and neglecting critical issues such as bodily autonomy, intersectionality, and civil rights, the Bill **risks institutionalising exclusion** rather than alleviating it.
 - A **more effective approach** would require a scientifically grounded and rights-based framework that clearly distinguishes between sex and gender, ensures robust legal protections for intersex individuals, dismantles exploitative systems, and guarantees full civil rights.
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