

DELIMITATION — A CASE OF TO BE OR NOT TO BE

- The process of delimitation in India is rooted in constitutional provisions, specifically **Articles 82 and 170(3)**, which mandate the periodic readjustment of constituencies following each Census.
- In the early decades after independence, delimitation exercises were conducted regularly, based on the Census data of 1951, 1961, and 1971, to ensure equitable representation in line with population changes.
- However, a major shift occurred in 1976, when the **42nd Amendment** froze delimitation.
- This decision was closely tied to population control policies, ensuring that States successfully reducing population growth would not lose representation relative to those with higher growth rates.
- This freeze reflected a broader policy concern: **balancing** democratic representation with incentives for population stabilisation.

Extension of the Freeze and Changing Demographics

- Although the freeze was initially intended to last until 2001, it was extended through the **84th Amendment** Act, 2001, pushing the deadline to 2026.
- During this period, while the number of seats remained constant, constituency boundaries were redrawn using 2001 Census data to address internal disparities caused by migration and uneven population growth.

The 2026 Delimitation Proposal: Intent and Contradictions

- The Delimitation Bill, 2026, seeks to address disparities in constituency populations and proposes a substantial increase in Lok Sabha seats, from the current strength to 850.
- It also links delimitation to the implementation of women's reservation, making the exercise politically and socially consequential.
- Yet, a central contradiction lies in the choice of data: the proposed delimitation is to be based on the 2011 Census.
- By the time the exercise is completed, this data would be over 15 years old.

The Challenge of Population as the Sole Criterion

- **Article 81(2)** of the Constitution emphasises population as the basis for allocating seats among States, ensuring that the ratio of representation remains broadly uniform.
- While this principle aligns with democratic equality, its rigid application in contemporary India raises concerns.
- States that have effectively implemented population control measures, primarily in southern and western India, risk losing **relative representation** if seat allocation strictly follows population growth.
- Conversely, States with higher population growth could gain **disproportionate influence**. This dynamic has the potential to create political tensions and disrupt the federal balance.

Federal Implications and the Need for Broader Criteria

- A purely population-based approach risks weakening the voice of States that have achieved **demographic stability**.
- This suggests the need for a more **nuanced framework** that incorporates additional criteria, such as development indicators, governance performance, or demographic achievements, alongside population.
- Given the proposed expansion in the number of seats, there is an opportunity to design a more balanced system that preserves both democratic equality and **federal integrity**.

Conclusion

- While objectives of proposed delimitation exercise, ensuring equitable representation and accommodating demographic changes, are legitimate, the methodology raises serious concerns.
- The reliance on outdated data, the exclusive emphasis on population, and the potential impact on federal balance all point to the need for a more carefully calibrated approach.
- Ultimately, delimitation is not just a technical exercise; it is a political and constitutional process that shapes the nature of **representation and governance**.

ISRAEL'S 'YELLOW LINE': REDEFINING SECURITY BOUNDARIES ACROSS THE LEVANT

- Israel has announced the creation of a “**Yellow Line**” buffer zone in southern Lebanon during a temporary ceasefire, allowing its forces to restrict civilian return, dismantle Hezbollah infrastructure, and conduct strikes beyond the zone.
- The “Yellow Line” emerged during the Gaza war of October 2025 as a military boundary dividing areas under Israeli control and Palestinian-held territory.
- Introduced in proposals linked to Donald Trump’s Gaza peace framework, it was physically marked by Israeli forces using barriers and markers inside Gaza.
- From Israel’s perspective, the Line represents a **forward defensive posture**, aimed at preventing militant groups like Hamas and Hezbollah from re-establishing operational strength near its borders—especially after the October 7 attacks.
- Initially conceived as a **temporary measure** for disarmament and security control, the Yellow Line has increasingly become a permanent feature of Israel’s military doctrine, signalling a shift toward deeper, pre-emptive territorial defence.

Yellow Line and the Militarisation of Gaza: Redefining the Operational Theatre

- **Strategic Re-engineering of the Battlefield** - The “Yellow Line” reflects the Israel Defense Forces shift toward restructuring the operational theatre, enabling it to manage security challenges with available resources while maintaining sustained territorial control.
- **Expansion of Direct Military Control** – Experts indicate that nearly 58% of the Gaza Strip falls under direct Israeli military control. Areas east of the line are treated as closed military and free-fire zones, restricting civilian access.
- **Shift from Mobile Warfare to Static Defence** - The IDF has transitioned from mobile manoeuvre operations to a fixed defensive posture, marking a significant doctrinal change. The Yellow Line functions as a permanent defensive boundary rather than a temporary deployment.

- Fortified Infrastructure and Heavy Deployment
 - To sustain this line, the IDF has built fortified positions featuring:
 - Elevated earth mounds
 - Communication towers
 - Concentrated troop deployments
 - Maintaining the boundary requires two full IDF divisions, making it a resource-intensive and logistically demanding strategy.

Humanitarian and Legal Concerns Over the Yellow Line

- International bodies and watchdogs have raised serious concerns about Israel's "Yellow Line", viewing it as a potential violation of international humanitarian law and ceasefire norms.
- The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights reported significant civilian casualties and continued military strikes near the zone, highlighting the intensity of operations.
- Human rights groups have described the policy as a form of systematic land seizure and forced ghettoisation.
- By restricting Palestinians to about 42% of Gaza, the Yellow Line limits access to key agricultural and urban areas, leading humanitarian agencies to characterise it as a tool of forced displacement and creeping annexation.

Internal Criticism of Israel's Yellow Line Strategy

- The "Yellow Line", initially framed as a security measure, has faced strong opposition within Israel from military experts, civil society, and economists.
- Critics argue that the strategy risks becoming a strategic liability rather than a defensive asset. They warn that shifting from mobile warfare to static defence exposes troops to guerrilla attacks, sniper fire, and anti-tank missiles.
- Military historians also draw parallels with Israel's costly occupation of the South Lebanon Security Zone occupation, cautioning that such fixed deployments could turn soldiers into "sitting targets" in a prolonged war of attrition.

DIFFERENTIATING WELFARE AND DEVELOPMENT

- In contemporary democratic politics, development has become a central **electoral promise**, often presented as a universal goal that transcends ideological divides.
- Political actors deploy the language of development to signal commitments to economic growth, infrastructure expansion, employment generation, and improved public services.
- In India, such narratives frequently emphasise visible and tangible outcomes, roads, housing, and large-scale infrastructure, as markers of progress.

Understanding Welfare and Development

- **Conceptual Differences**
 - Welfare refers to redistributive interventions aimed at addressing immediate needs such as poverty alleviation, food security, and income support.
 - These measures are typically **short-term and consumption-oriented**.
 - Development, on the other hand, is a long-term process involving structural transformation, economic growth, productivity enhancement, and the expansion of human capabilities.
 - It is production-oriented and requires sustained investment over time.
- **The Source of Confusion**
 - In practice, the boundaries between welfare and development often blur.
 - This is particularly evident in India, where large-scale welfare programmes coexist with ambitions of rapid **economic growth**.
 - Political narratives frequently present welfare schemes as indicators of development, even when their long-term impact is limited.
 - This confusion arises largely from differing time horizons, **welfare delivers immediate**, visible benefits, while development unfolds gradually.
 - Electoral cycles tend to favour the former, reinforcing the conflation of the two.

Policy Challenges and the Way Forward

- Balancing immediate social needs with long-term economic objectives requires **careful design** and **implementation** of policies.
- Welfare systems must be fiscally sustainable, efficiently targeted, and aligned with broader developmental goals.
- Moreover, political discourse and election manifestos need to adopt a **more nuanced understanding** of development.
- Rather than promising quick results, they should emphasise long-term strategies, institutional strengthening, and sustained investment in public goods.

Conclusion

- Development remains a powerful and necessary aspiration in democratic politics; however, its meaning has often been diluted by **political rhetoric** that conflates it with short-term welfare measures and visible achievements.
- **Recognising the distinction** between welfare and development, and their complementary roles, is essential for achieving sustainable and inclusive progress.
- Ultimately, true development requires **moving beyond electoral cycles** and simplistic narratives toward a long-term vision grounded in structural transformation, institutional strength, and human capability expansion.

OCI CARD ELIGIBILITY EXPANSION IN SRI LANKA

- The OCI scheme was introduced in 2005 through an amendment to the **Citizenship Act, 1955**.
- It provides a form of long-term residency and travel facility to persons of Indian origin who are citizens of other countries.
- During a two-day visit to Sri Lanka, Vice-President **C.P. Radhakrishnan** announced that OCI card eligibility will now be extended to the sixth generation of Indian-origin people in Sri Lanka.

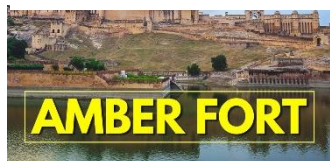
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Current Affairs - 20 April 2026

- Previously, **eligibility was restricted to the fourth generation**. The new policy significantly expands the coverage of the Indian diaspora in Sri Lanka.
- OCI cards will now be issued based on documents provided by the Sri Lankan government in many cases, which simplifies the application process.
- **Eligibility and Features**
 - OCI status is granted to foreign nationals who can prove Indian ancestry. Earlier, eligibility was generally limited to up to the fourth generation in certain cases.
 - OCI cardholders enjoy multiple-entry, lifelong visa access to India. They are exempt from registering with local police authorities for long stays.
 - They are also granted parity with Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) in areas such as education and economic opportunities, except for political rights.
 - However, OCI is not dual citizenship. OCI holders cannot vote, hold constitutional posts, or acquire agricultural land.
- **Significance of OCI Scheme**
 - The OCI scheme strengthens India's engagement with its diaspora. It promotes cultural ties, facilitates investment, and enhances people-to-people connections.
 - It also plays a strategic role in foreign policy, particularly in regions with significant Indian-origin populations such as Sri Lanka, Mauritius, and Southeast Asia.
- **Merger of PIO and OCI**
 - The Person of Indian Origin (PIO) scheme and the OCI scheme were both introduced to facilitate engagement with the Indian diaspora.
 - However, the PIO scheme was later merged with OCI in 2015 to simplify administrative processes and remove duplication between the two schemes.
 - It also strengthened India's engagement with its diaspora by offering a unified and more beneficial framework under OCI.

AMBER FORT



- Amber Fort, also known as Amer Fort, is located in Amer in Rajasthan.
- It was constructed atop a hill. The fort was strategically situated on the Aravalli Range, providing a commanding view of the surrounding region.
- It was originally built by Raja Man Singh I, the Kachwaha Rajput ruler, in the late 16th century.
 - Man Singh was one of the trusted generals of Emperor Akbar and one among the Navaratnas of his court.
- Prior to shifting their capital to Jaipur, Amer was the capital of the Kachhwaha Rajputs.
- The original construction of the fort began in 1592.
- It underwent significant expansion and renovation under the reign of Jai Singh I, who ruled from 1621 to 1667.
 - He is credited with constructing the impressive Diwan-i-Khas (Hall of Private Audience) and the Sheesh Mahal (Mirror Palace) within the fort complex.
- Following Jai Singh I's enhancements, successive rulers of the Kachwaha dynasty continued to contribute to Amer Fort's development, until the capital was shifted to Jaipur in 1727.
- It is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- Architecture:
 - Its architecture is a noteworthy fusion of Rajput (Hindu) and Mughal (Islamic) styles.
 - It was built using pink and yellow sandstones.
 - With its large ramparts, series of gates and cobbled paths, the fort overlooks the Maota Lake, at its forefront.
 - It has splendid palaces, courtyards, and the famous Sheesh Mahal.

COL. SHER JUNG NATIONAL PARK



- Sher Jung National Park, also known as **Simbalbara National Park**, is located in the Paonta Valley of the Sirmaur (Sirmour) district in **Himachal Pradesh along its border with Haryana.**
- It is named after the famous freedom fighter and ardent environmentalist **Colonel Sher Jung.**
- The park is located in the **lower Shiwalik region** and extends into the middle and upper Shiwaliks.
- Geographically, it is at the **confluence of three biogeographic regions:** the **Himalayas**, the **Gangetic plain**, and the **semi-arid region.**
- It touches **Kalesar National Park of Haryana** to its south and west.
- The **Simbalbara River** flows through Simbalbara National Park and is a lifeline for the park's plants and animals.
- **Vegetation:** It is characterized by its **dense Sal forests with grassy glades.**
- **Flora:**
 - **Sal** (*Shorea robusta*) and **Terminalia tomentosa** are the **principal species** that form the top canopy here.
 - On the **riverine side**, **Jamun** (*Syzygium cumini*), **Cassia siamea**, and **Eucalyptus** are present.
- **Fauna:**
 - Some key species include **Nilgai**, **Sambar deer**, **spotted deer**, wild boar, goral, barking deer, and Rhesus macaque.
 - The park also serves as a significant bird habitat, home to species like the **Indian roller**, **dollar bird**, **kingfishers**, and three types of hornbills.
 - **Predatory birds** such as the **crested serpent eagle** and **Brahminy kite** also inhabit this area.