



## **DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS 18-04-2026**

### **Mapping Perspective**

1. Scarborough Shoal

### **Prelims Perspective**

2. BCG Vaccine
3. Tibetan Antelope

### **Mains Perspective**

4. Delimitation Reforms in India
5. Jan Vishwas Bill

## Scarborough Shoal

Syllabus: GS-1: World Geography – Disputed Regions.

Context:

- China is employing ships and a barrier to tighten control of the entrance to the Scarborough Shoal in the South China Sea amid rising tensions with the Philippines over the disputed feature.

About Scarborough Shoal

### Disputed claims in the South China Sea



Source: D.Rosenberg/MiddleburyCollege/HarvardAsiaQuarterly/Phil gov't

[news.yahoo.com/photos/world-events-slideshow/disputed-claims-south-china-sea-photo-062248000.html](https://news.yahoo.com/photos/world-events-slideshow/disputed-claims-south-china-sea-photo-062248000.html)

AFP

- It is a **disputed atoll in the South China Sea**, claimed by both China and the Philippines as part of their territory.
- It is called **Huangyan Island (China)** and **Panatag Shoal / Bajo de Masinloc (Philippines)**.
- Named after **HMS Scarborough**, an English ship chartered by the East India Company that struck the atoll in the 18th century.

- Located **~220 km west of Luzon (Philippines)** and **>800 km southeast of Hong Kong**.
- It is the **largest atoll in the South China Sea**.
- Covers an **area of ~150 sq. km**, including a shallow navigable lagoon.
- **Mostly submerged at high tide**, but some rocks (notably **South Rock**) remain above water.

### Nature of the Dispute

#### China's Claim

- Based on **historical grounds**, tracing ownership back to the **Yuan Dynasty (1200s)**.

#### Philippines' Claim

- Based on **geographical proximity**, being much closer to Luzon (with Manila) and over 500 miles from China.
- Falls within the **200-nautical mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)** under the **1982 UNCLOS**.

### Present Status

- No permanent structures built on the shoal.
- **Effectively controlled by China**, maintaining constant coast guard presence since 2012.

### Commercial & Strategic Significance

- **Rich fishing grounds** in surrounding waters.
- Seabed believed to contain **substantial mineral resources** including petroleum and natural gas.
- Strategic location in the **South China Sea**, a major global maritime trade route.

### Analytical Insights for Mains Exam

- Illustrates **conflict between historical claims vs UNCLOS-based maritime entitlements**.
- Highlights **China's assertive maritime strategy** and **grey-zone tactics (coast guard, barriers)**.
- Reflects broader **South China Sea geopolitics and regional security concerns** involving ASEAN states.

## **BCG Vaccine**

**Syllabus: GS-3: Science and Technology – Biotechnology.**

**Context:**

- Recently, India announced that it has supplied **13 tonnes of Bacille Calmette-Guérin (BCG) vaccines to Afghanistan**

### **About Bacille Calmette-Guérin (BCG) Vaccine**

- It is the **live attenuated vaccine form of Mycobacterium bovis**
- It is used to **prevent tuberculosis and other mycobacterial infections**
- **Developed By:** Calmette and Guérin; first administered to human beings in **1921**
- It is the **only vaccine against tuberculosis**

### **Other Uses / Features**

- It is the **most widely administered vaccine** and part of the **routine newborn immunization schedule**
- It also offers protection against **non-tuberculous mycobacterial infections like leprosy and Buruli ulcer**
- It is also used in the **treatment of superficial carcinoma of the bladder**
- The vaccine is administered **intradermally**
- Storage and transport temperature: **+2°C to +8°C**
- It has **two components:** freeze-dried vaccine + diluent (for reconstitution), presented in **amber glass ampoules and colourless ampoules respectively**

### **Key Facts about Tuberculosis (TB)**

- It is caused by bacteria (**Mycobacterium tuberculosis**) that most often affect the **lungs**
- It is a **curable and preventable disease**

### **Transmission of TB**

- TB is spread from **person to person through the air**
- When people with lung TB **cough, sneeze or spit**, they release TB germs into the air
- Even inhaling a **few droplets** can cause infection

### **Symptoms of TB**

- Persistent cough for **more than 3 weeks**, often with blood
- Weight loss, night sweats, high fever
- Fatigue, loss of appetite, chest pain
- Swollen lymph nodes

### Treatment / Role of BCG

- The Bacillus Calmette–Guérin (BCG) vaccine provides **moderate protection**, mainly for **severe TB in infants and children**

## Tibetan Antelope

### Syllabus: Prelims Bits – Wildlife in News

#### Context:

- Recently, a New Delhi court has convicted an art gallery owner for attempting to illegally export **Shahtoosh shawls – made from Tibetan Antelope**

#### About Tibetan Antelope (Chiru)

- Tibetan antelope or chiru (*Pantholopshodgsonii*) is a **medium-sized antelope**

#### Appearance



- Male Tibetan antelopes are **significantly larger than females**

- Males distinguished by **presence of horns and black stripes on legs**, both absent in females
- Fur is **distinctive** → long guard hair + silky undercoat of shorter fibers

### Habitat

- Inhabit **open alpine, montane valleys, and cold steppe environments** with sparse vegetation cover

### Distribution

- Found almost entirely in **China** → Tibet, southern Xinjiang, western Qinghai
- Few populations across border in **Chang Thang, Ladakh (India)**

### Migration

- **Migratory species** → travel up to **400 km** between summer and winter grounds

### Diet

- **Herbivores (folivores, graminivores)**
- Feed on **forbs, grasses, herbs, shrubland, and sedges**

### Conservation Status

- **IUCN Red List:** Near Threatened
- **CITES:** Appendix I
- **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972:** Schedule I

### Shahtoosh Shawls

- Made from **hair of Tibetan Antelope**
- Known for **exceptional smoothness and warmth**, hence highly expensive
- **Trade banned globally since 1975 under CITES**

### Prelims Insight

- Illustrates **illegal wildlife trade vs conservation framework (CITES + WPA, 1972)**
- Highlights **transboundary species conservation (China-India region)**
- Important for **Prelims (species status, habitat)** and **Mains (wildlife protection, enforcement challenges)**

## **Delimitation Reforms in India**

**Syllabus: GS-2: Indian Polity – Federalism – Elections – Delimitation.**

### **Context:**

- Parliament's Budget Session reconvened to consider **two major constitutional changes** reshaping Indian democracy:
  - Expansion of Lok Sabha from **543 to up to 850 seats** via Delimitation Commission
  - Linking delimitation with **Women's Reservation Act (2023)** (1/3rd reservation in Parliament & State Assemblies)
- Objective: make democracy **more representative, inclusive, and equitable**

### **Delimitation & Women's Reservation Link**

- Women's reservation (2023) **constitutionally approved but implementation pending delimitation**
- Earlier tied to **post-2026 Census delimitation**
- Government now **expediting delimitation by amending freeze provisions**
- Delimitation becomes **central to enabling early rollout of women's reservation**

### **Constitutional Basis of Delimitation**

- Based on principle: **"Each vote should carry equal weight"**
- Requires constituencies with **roughly equal population** for fair representation

### **Key Constitutional Provisions**

- **Article 82:** Readjustment of Lok Sabha & Assembly constituencies after every Census (seat number/boundary changes)
- **Article 81:** Ensures **uniform population-to-seat ratio across states**
- Applies similarly to **State Assemblies**

### **Freeze on Delimitation (1976–2026)**

- No delimitation since **1976** due to concerns of states with **slower population growth**
- **1976 Amendment:** Freeze for 25 years

- **2001 Amendment:** Extended freeze till **2026**
- Fear: loss of representation vis-à-vis faster-growing states

### Emerging Debate on Ending Freeze

- Government signals **no extension beyond 2026**
- Concern persists among **southern/low fertility states** over **representation imbalance**

### Government's Delimitation Proposal

- Increase Lok Sabha strength:
  - **543 → up to 850 seats** (815 States + 35 UTs)
- Earlier assurance: **uniform 50% increase across states**
- **Bill lacks explicit guarantee → uncertainty in seat distribution**

### Major Constitutional Changes Proposed

- **Delinking from Census:** Delimitation need not follow every Census
- **Flexible Census Use:** Parliament decides which Census data to use
- Change in population definition: from **"last preceding Census" → "as determined by Parliament"**
- **Immediate Delimitation Enabled:** Possible using **2011 Census**, without waiting for next Census (~2027)

### Core Debate: Representation vs Equality

- **Uncertainty in seat allocation** due to lack of clear formula
- **Trade-off:**
  - Uniform increase → preserves state share but violates **"one vote, one value"**
  - Population-based allocation → ensures equality but alters federal balance

### Unequal Value of Votes (Present Scenario)

- Himachal Pradesh MP ≈ **17.16 lakh people**
- Haryana MP ≈ **25.35 lakh people**
- ⇒ Vote in Haryana has **lower representational weight**
- Delimitation aims to **reduce such disparities**

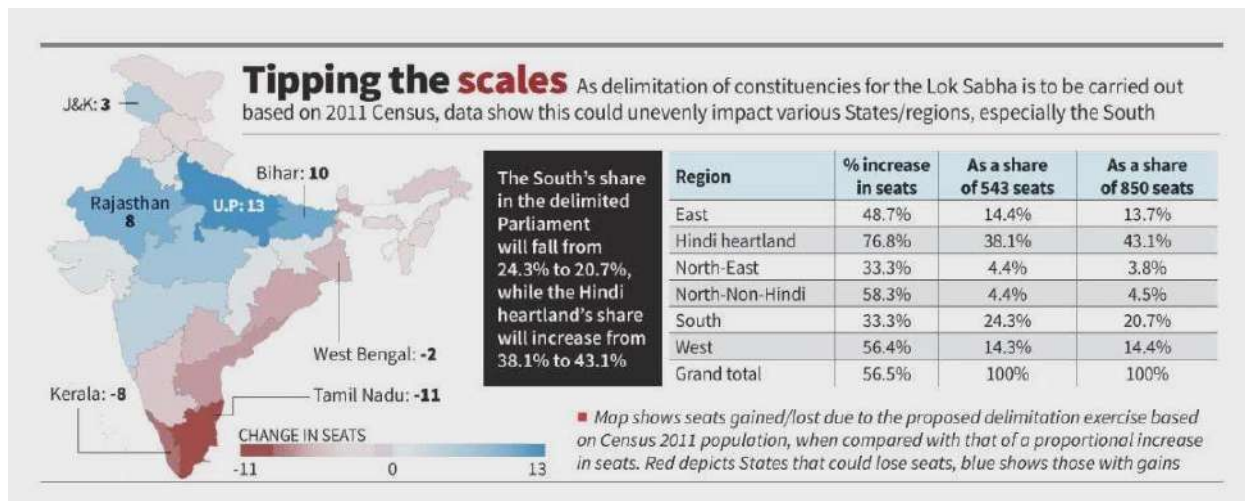
### Impact of Population-Based Redistribution

- **Uttar Pradesh:** 80 → ~140 seats

- **Tamil Nadu:** 39 → ~51 seats
- ⇒ Potential **major shift in political power among states**

### Opposition Criticism

- No guarantee of **maintaining existing state-wise seat proportions**
- May **benefit high population growth states** (“rewarding” them)
- Uniform 50% increase may **widen absolute disparities**
- Suggested alternative: **Hybrid model (population + economic indicators like GSDP)**



### Government's Response

- Proposal to **add a Schedule** specifying state-wise seat increase
- Aim:
  - Address **southern states' concerns**
  - Ensure **seat share does not decline**
  - Provide **transparency in allocation**

### Conclusion

- Delimitation reform represents a **critical intersection of federalism, representation, and electoral equity**
- Key tension: **Demographic justice vs political balance**
- Its linkage with **women's reservation** makes it **politically urgent and constitutionally significant**

## **Jan Vishwas Bill**

**Syllabus: GS-2: Indian Polity and Governance**

**Context:**

- Parliament has passed the Bill, 2026, expanding India's decriminalisation exercise across multiple laws

### **Jan Vishwas Bill, 2026**

- Major legislative reform aimed at **rationalising criminal provisions across various laws**
- Builds upon earlier **Jan Vishwas Act, 2023** (amended 183 provisions across 42 laws)
- 2026 expansion:
  - Amends **784 provisions across 79 Central laws**
  - **Decriminalises/rationalises 1,018 offences**
- Reflects shift from **punitive criminal enforcement** → **balanced regulatory approach**

### **Scope and Coverage**

- Spans multiple sectors affecting businesses and citizens:
  - **Industry & business laws:** Tea Act, Coir Industry Act, Legal Metrology Act
  - **Municipal governance:** Delhi Development Act, Municipal Corporation laws, Cantonments Act
  - **Infrastructure & transport:** Motor Vehicles Act, Coastal Shipping Act, pipeline laws
  - **Colonial-era laws:** Cattle Trespass Act, Livestock Importation Act, Indian Succession Act
- Indicates **systemic overhaul (not sector-specific reform)**

### **Key Features of the Bill**

#### **1. Decriminalisation**

- **805 offences decriminalised**

- Imprisonment replaced with **civil penalties/warnings**
- Offences removed from criminal justice system

## 2. Omission of Offences

- **125 obsolete/redundant offences removed**
- Some omitted as already covered under general criminal law (e.g., BNS)

## 3. Compounding of Offences

- **35 offences made compoundable**
- Enables settlement through payment → reduces litigation burden

## 4. Rationalisation of Punishments

- **53 offences see reduced/revised penalties**
- Removes disproportionate punishments (e.g., life imprisonment)

## Shift: Criminal → Civil Enforcement

- **Fines:** imposed by courts (criminal proceedings)
- **Penalties:** civil in nature, imposed by adjudicating officers
- Objectives:
  - Reduce burden on courts
  - Faster resolution of minor violations
  - Improve regulatory efficiency

## Types of Offences Addressed

### 1. Outdated & Minor Offences

- Removal of trivial offences (minor public nuisances)
- Elimination of obsolete colonial provisions

### 2. General Contraventions

- Reduction of omnibus criminal provisions
- Example: Motor Vehicles Act → first violations may attract warnings

### 3. Procedural Defaults

- Minor compliance failures (e.g., filing delays) decriminalised
- Example: Tea Act return filing → civil penalties

### 4. Obstruction-Related Offences

- Vague offences like “obstruction of public servants” rationalised/removed

### **Graded Enforcement Mechanism**

- Introduces **progressive enforcement framework**:
  - Warning for first violation
  - Improvement notice for correction
  - Escalation to penalties/sanctions for repetition
- Some laws follow sequence: **notice** → **suspension** → **cancellation**
- Ensures **proportionality in enforcement**

### **Need for the Reform**

- Excessive criminalisation in regulatory framework:
  - **7,305 criminal offences across 370 Central laws**
  - **5,333 offences carried imprisonment**
  - **74% laws regulatory (not core criminal laws)**
- Consequences:
  - High compliance burden
  - Fear of prosecution for minor lapses
  - Inefficiencies in criminal justice system

### **Significance of the Bill**

- Represents **structural shift in governance philosophy**
- Promotes **ease of doing business**
- Reduces **overcriminalisation in regulatory laws**
- Encourages **trust-based governance**
- Improves **efficiency of legal enforcement**
- Marks transition: **control-based state** → **facilitative regulatory framework**