



**Sanskriti IAS**

*15th April 2026*



**IMPORTANT**

**EDITORIAL HIGHLIGHTS**

**DELHI CENTRE:**  
636, Mukherjee Nagar  
New Delhi-110009

**PRAYAGRAJ CENTRE:**  
1/1/8A, Stanley Rd,  
Maharana Pratap Chauraha,  
Civil Lines, Prayagraj, UP - 211002

 **9555-124-124**

 **sanskritiias.com**

# GS 2: INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

## INDIAN EXPRESS PAGE : 1

RUBIO HAILS DIALOGUE, BUT SAYS NO BREAKTHROUGH EXPECTED IMMEDIATELY; CITES DECADES OF COMPLEXITIES

### Lebanon, Israel hold historic direct talks

**Israel says Lebanese govt ready to break with Hezbollah; militant group opposes Washington meet**

Kareem Chehayeb & Matthew Lee  
Washington, April 14

LEBANON AND Israel opened their first direct diplomatic talks in decades on Tuesday in Washington following more than a month of war between Israel and the Hezbollah militant group. US Secretary of State Marco Rubio called it a "historic opportunity," but made clear that no breakthrough agreement was immediately expected.

Rubio said the Trump administration is "very happy" to be facilitating the discussions, while noting "we understand we're working against decades of history and complexities" that will not be quickly resolved.

Reuters adds: The Israeli Ambassador to the US said that the Lebanese government made it clear in the meeting that it will no longer be occupied by Hezbollah. He added both parties talked about long-term vision for a clearly delineated border.

Hezbollah opposes the direct talks and was not represented, and the group appeared to step up its fire on northern Israel as the talks began. "But we can begin to move forward with a framework where something

can happen, something very positive, something very permanent, so that the people of Lebanon can have the kind of future they deserve, and so that the people of Israel can live without fear," Rubio said.

Rubio and US Ambassador to the United Nations Mike Waltz attended the opening of the session at the State Department that is being led by US Ambassador to Lebanon Michel Issa, Israeli Ambassador to the US Yechiel Leiter and Lebanese Ambassador to the US Nada Hamadeh Moawad.

The Lebanese government hopes the talks will pave the way to an end to the war. While Iran has set ending the wars in Lebanon and the region as a condition for talks with US, Lebanon insists on representing itself.

Wafiq Safa, a high-ranking member of the militant group's political council, told AP that it will not abide by any agreements made in the talks.

Hezbollah-allied politicians hold two Cabinet minister positions, though the group's ties have soured with Lebanon's top political authorities, who have been critical of Hezbollah's decision to enter the war last month.



From left: Michael Needham, US State Department counselor, US envoy to the UN Mike Waltz, Secretary of State Marco Rubio, US envoy to Lebanon Michel Issa, Lebanese envoy to the US Nada Hamadeh Moawad and Israeli envoy to the US Yechiel Leiter before the meeting in Washington on Tuesday. AP

**Six ships turned around as part of Hormuz blockade, says US military**

Reuters  
Washington, April 14

NOSHIPS have made it past a US naval blockade of Iran's ports and coastal areas, and six merchant ships have followed orders to turn back, the US military said on Tuesday, providing the first details on a day-old effort ordered by President Donald Trump after peace talks between the US and Iran broke down.

The US military has said that the blockade, which started on Monday, would only apply to ships going to or from Iran, including all Iranian ports on the Gulf and Gulf of Oman.

"During the first 24 hours, no ships made it past the US blockade and six merchant vessels complied with direction from US forces to turn around to re-enter an Iranian port on the Gulf of Oman," the US military's Central Command said.

More than 10,000 US military personnel and dozens of aircraft were enforcing the blockade, it said. "The blockade is being enforced impartially against vessels of all nations entering or departing Iranian ports and coastal areas," the statement added.

### Xi: World can't go back to the law of the jungle

Associated Press  
Beijing, April 14

THE LEADERS of China and Spain on Tuesday pledged to work to safeguard multilateralism at a time of conflicts including the war in Iran, with Chinese President Xi Jinping saying the countries should "oppose the world's retrogression to the law of the jungle."

Xi said they should "jointly safeguard genuine multilateralism," strengthen communi-



China's President Xi Jinping

cation and cooperate closely, during a reception for Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez at the Great Hall of the

People. Sánchez agreed and said China and Spain "can contribute to finding solutions to the various trade tensions that exist, to the geopolitical difficulties and complexities of today's world, to the wars, to the environmental and social challenges that afflict the world."

Sánchez is on his fourth trip in just over three years to the world's second-largest economy. Spain is looking to strengthen political and commercial ties.

## GS 2: POLITY

### INDIAN EXPRESS PAGE : 1

• 'TEMPERANCE...PROVES ESSENTIAL FOR THE LEGITIMATE USE OF AUTHORITY, FOR TRUE TEMPERANCE RESTRAINS INORDINATE SELF-EXALTATION'

## Pope warns against democracies sliding into 'tyranny'

Reuters

Annaba, Algeria, April 14

POPE LEO warned of the risk of democracies sliding into "majoritarian tyranny" on Tuesday, in a letter issued by the Vatican two days after US President Donald Trump attacked the pontiff on social media.

The first US Pope, writing to participants of a Vatican meeting about the use of power in democratic societies, said democracies remained healthy only when they were rooted in moral values.

"Lacking this foundation, (democracy) risks becoming either a majoritarian tyranny or a mask for the dominance of

economic and technological elites," said Leo in the letter.

The text, released as the Pope was undertaking an ambitious, 10-day tour of four African countries, did not directly address the US or name any specific democracies.

Trump sharply criticized Leo as "terrible" on Sunday night, after the Pope had emerged in recent weeks as a growing critic of the US-Israeli war on Iran.

Leo told Reuters on Monday that he planned to keep criticizing the war, despite Trump's comments. In Tuesday's letter, the Pope said the Catholic Church taught that power could not be seen as an end in itself "but as a means ordered



Pope Leo XIV is presented with a gift during his visit to the nursing home of the Little Sisters of the Poor in Annaba, Algeria, Tuesday. AP

toward the common good".

"This implies that the legitimacy of authority depends not

on the accumulation of economic or technological strength, but on the wisdom and virtue

with which it is exercised," said Leo. The pope also urged leaders in democratic societies to avoid any temptation to hoard power. "Temperance... proves essential for the legitimate use of authority, for true temperance restrains inordinate self-exaltation and acts as a guardrail against the abuse of power," he said.

Pope Leo paid homage to his spiritual roots on Tuesday, travelling to the ancient birthplace in Algeria of St. Augustine of Hippo, who inspired him to become a priest.

In honouring Augustine, Leo was highlighting a personal connection to a major figure of the early church who first pro-

posed criteria to evaluate whether wars could be considered just.

Augustine, who died in the year 430, said wars should only be waged in order to defend against aggression or protect the innocent, with the intention of restoring a state of peace and never out of a desire for cruelty.

Those criteria, with updates, remain the Catholic doctrine.

At a later meeting on Tuesday at a nearby nursing home run by Catholic sisters, the pope, a member of the Augustinian religious order, spoke out again. "God's heart is torn apart by wars, violence, injustice and lies," Leo told the residents of the Little Sisters of the Poor home.

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#### 40-MINUTE PHONE CALL

# Trump dials Modi again, discusses keeping Strait of Hormuz open, secure

Big-ticket items to be announced over next few days or weeks, says envoy Gor

Shubhajit Roy  
New Delhi, April 14

A DAY after he ordered a US naval blockade of Iran's ports and coastal areas, President Donald Trump called up Prime Minister Narendra Modi Tuesday who said they "discussed the situation in West Asia and stressed the importance of keeping the Strait of Hormuz open and secure".

The phone call, which lasted around 40 minutes, was the first conversation between the two leaders after the US and Iran announced a conditional ceasefire last week.

In a post on X after the call, Modi said, "Received a call from my friend President Donald Trump. We reviewed the substantial progress achieved in our bilateral cooperation in

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A second round of talks could happen 'over the next two days' in Islamabad, US President Donald Trump said. AP

## US wants 20-yr freeze on n-plan, Iran for 5; moves to resume talks

David E Sanger  
& Tyler Pager  
Washington, April 14

JUST BEFORE Vice President JD Vance left Islamabad early Sunday morning, he described Iran and the United States as worlds apart, chiefly on the question of assurances that Iran can never build a nuclear

weapon — "not just now, not just two years from now, but for the long term." It turns out that the Trump administration's idea of the long term is 20 years.

As details of Vance's 21-hour visit to Pakistan spilled out, people familiar with the negotiations said the US position was not a permanent ban on

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**INDIAN EXPRESS PAGE : 2**

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT BILLS CIRCULATED FOR THREE-DAY SESSION

**Women's quota: Govt for House at 850, delimitation on 2011 Census**

**Bill sets stage for delimitation panel with civil court's powers**

Deeptiman Tiwary & Damini Nath  
New Delhi, April 14

THE GOVERNMENT Tuesday circulated three Bills to pave the way for fresh delimitation based on "such Census, as Parliament may by law determine, of which the relevant figures have been published", likely the 2011 count; raise the strength of Lok Sabha from the current 543 to 850 members; and operationalise one-third reservation of seats for women in Parliament and state Assemblies.

The legislative package comprises the Constitution (One Hundred and Thirty-First Amendment) Bill, 2026, the Delimitation Bill, 2026, and the Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2025. It builds on the Constitution (One Hundred and Sixth Amendment) Act, 2023, which had introduced women's reservation but linked its implementation to a future Census and delimitation exercise.

At the core of the move is the removal of the decades-old constitutional freeze on readjustment of seats, which had pegged representation to the 1971 Census. The new amendment

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PM Narendra Modi with Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge at an event to mark Dr B R Ambedkar's birth anniversary in Parliament complex, Tuesday. Vice President C P Radhakrishnan is also present.

**Bill proposes to end mandatory delimitation after every Census**

Damini Nath, Vikas Pathak, Deeptiman Tiwary & Amitabh Sinha  
New Delhi, April 14

DEALING WITH delimitation of constituencies for early implementation of women's reservation in Parliament and state Assemblies, the three Bills that the government proposes to bring in the extended Budget

session of Parliament later this week answer many questions even as they raise doubts that may be debated in Parliament.

The capping of elected members at 815 is a 50% increase on the existing strength of 543 in the Lok Sabha. The Lok Sabha chamber in the new Parliament building has a seating

capacity for 888 members — expandable to 1,272 members for a joint session.



It is, however, not clear what will be the formula for seat allocation in each state based on population. In public statements on delimitation, the government has promised to maintain the proportion

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**Delimitation divide: Stalin, Revanth raise alarm, TDP backs Centre**

Liz Mathew, Vikas Pathak & Jatin Anand  
New Delhi, April 14

AS THE government Tuesday shared the texts of three Bills it proposes to introduce in Parliament — during the extended three-day Budget Session starting Thursday — on the delimitation of constituencies for early implementation of women's reservation in Parliament and state Assemblies, differences among southern states came to the fore.

While Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin warned the BJP-led Centre against bulldozing "through a Constitutional amendment" in the midst of Assembly elections and said his state would protest if the "political power of northern states" goes up disproportionately, his Telangana counterpart Revanth Reddy pushed for "broad-based consultations and consensus building". BJP ally TDP, which is in power in Andhra Pradesh, however, said the government's moves were along the lines discussed with Opposition floor leaders and that seats across states would be increased by 50% on a pro rata basis.

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#### Women's quota

enables delimitation based on the "latest published census figures" as may be notified by Parliament, effectively clearing the way for a comprehensive redistribution of seats in line with current population patterns.

The amendment caps the strength of elected members from states at 815 and from Union Territories 35, significantly increasing the size of Lok Sabha and altering the arithmetic of parliamentary majorities.

The Constitution (One Hundred and Thirty-First Amendment) Bill, 2026 seeks to amend Article 81 of the Constitution, which pertains to the composition of Lok Sabha. The amendment proposes to increase the total strength to 850, up from the current limit of 550.

As of date, Article 81 (2) and (3), freeze Lok Sabha seats as per the 1971 Census and Assembly seats as per the 2001 Census, "until the relevant figures for the first Census taken after the year 2026 have been published". In normal course, this would have meant the 2031 Census. But the 2021 Census was delayed.

The Bill also amends the marginal heading of Article 82 from "Readjustment after each Census" to "Readjustment of constituencies", and removes the requirement of readjusting the number of Lok Sabha seats in states after every Census.

Similarly, it makes amendments to the Articles pertaining to state Assemblies and reservation for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, changing the basis from the 2001 Census to "such Census" that Parliament decides by law to use.

The accompanying Delimitation Bill lays down the institutional framework for this exercise. It provides for a Delimitation Commission headed by a Supreme Court judge, with the Chief Election Commissioner and State Election Commissioners as members, and gives it powers equivalent to a civil court. The Commission will be tasked with

allocating seats across States, re-drawing constituency boundaries, and determining reservation for SCs, STs and women.

Apart from the latest Census figures, the Delimitation Commission, like in the past, is required to ensure, as much as possible, that all constituencies are geographically compact areas. The "physical features, existing boundaries of administrative units, facilities of communication and public convenience" are also to be taken into account.

Crucially, the exercise will also trigger the implementation of the women's reservation law passed in 2023. One-third of seats in the Lok Sabha and state Assemblies, including within SC and ST quotas, will be reserved for women, with constituencies to be rotated after each delimitation cycle.

The reservation is valid for a period of 15 years, with the possibility of extension by Parliament.

In the statement of objects and reasons to the Constitution amendment Bill, Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal cited the time that the next Census will take.

"While the freeze of seats on the basis of population figures of the year 1971 census served an important policy purpose, the country's demographic profile has since undergone substantial changes, as reflected in the population figures of the latest published census, including significant inter-State and intra-State population shifts, rapid urbanisation and migration, and disproportionate growth in certain regions, resulting in wide disparities in the population and the constituencies... The next census and the consequential delimitation exercise thereafter will take considerable time and thus, delay the effective and dedicated participation of women in our democratic polity," he wrote on April 11.

The UT Bill makes the relevant changes to the laws for

Delhi, Jammu and Kashmir and Puducherry.

The sequencing is politically significant. The 2023 amendment had drawn criticism from Opposition parties for deferring implementation by linking it to delimitation after a fresh Census. By advancing the delimitation framework, the government has now moved to operationalise the quota, a reform that has remained stalled for decades.

At the same time, the move reopens a sensitive political question: the redistribution of seats across states. Since the freeze was introduced in the 1970s to incentivise population control, states that successfully reduced fertility rates, largely in the south, have retained their share of seats despite slower population growth. A fresh delimitation based on updated Census data would ideally increase the representation of states in the Hindi heartland, where population growth has been higher, potentially reducing the relative weight of southern states.

The government, however, has promised that the proportional share of states in the composition of Parliament as it stands today would not be disturbed. It will now be incumbent upon the delimitation commission to come up with a formula that can keep the promise.

The Bills also incorporate procedural safeguards, including the publication of draft delimitation proposals, inviting objections, and holding public hearings before finalisation.

Once notified, the commission's orders will have the force of law and cannot be challenged in court, a provision aimed at ensuring finality but one that may itself invite scrutiny.

Opposition parties have broadly supported women's reservation but remain wary of the broader implications of the delimitation exercise. Apart from concerns over seat redistribution, there are demands for an additional quota for women from Other Backward Classes (OBCs), which is not provided for in the current framework.

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#### Bill proposals

of seats held by each state currently in Parliament. Under the "one person, one vote, one value" principle of the Constitution, the exercise could be complicated given the vast gap that has accumulated over four decades in populations of states in north and south India.

No delimitation has been conducted following the one based on the 1971 Census. The latest delimitation is proposed to be conducted based on the 2011 Census.

More significantly, the Bills could alter the nature of future delimitation exercises. The Bills propose to end the Constitutional framework for delimitation after every decadal Census.

At the core of this shift is a proposed amendment to Article 82 of the Constitution. The draft Constitution (One Hundred and Thirty-First Amendment) Bill, 2026 seeks to rename it from "Readjustment after each Census" to "Readjustment of constituencies", while removing the explicit requirement that seat allocation and constituency division follow every Census. In effect, delimitation would no longer be a mandatory, periodic exercise tied to decadal population data.

A related change in Article 81 redefines "population" for the purpose of seat allocation. Instead of mandating reliance on the last published Census, the amendment allows Parliament to determine, by law, which Census figures will be used. This introduces flexibility in choosing the reference population, but also shifts discretion to the political executive of the day.

Together, these provisions move delimitation away from a constitutionally-triggered process to one that can be operationalised through ordinary legislation.

The Bills provide that readjustment will be carried out by a

Delimitation Commission "in such manner and on the basis of such census" as may be specified. This means the timing of the exercise, and the dataset it relies on, can be determined through a simple majority in Parliament.

This marks a break from past practice. Since the 1970s, any decision to defer delimitation – primarily to avoid penalising states that had successfully controlled population growth – required constitutional amendments passed with a two-thirds majority, as in 1976 and 2001. The proposed framework lowers that threshold, potentially giving greater latitude to future governments in shaping the exercise.

Even as the Bills retain population as the basis for redrawing constituencies, they do not spell out how Lok Sabha seats will be distributed across states while preserving existing regional balances.

The Delimitation Bill, 2026 refers to the "latest census figures" available when the Commission is set up, and reiterates established criteria such as administrative boundaries, physical features and public convenience. But the absence of a clear allocation formula leaves a gap between the stated political assurance of maintaining current proportions and the legal framework proposed.

This gap becomes sharper when viewed against the constitutional principle of equal representation. Article 81 requires that the ratio between a state's population and its allocated seats be, as far as practicable, uniform across the country, and that constituencies within a state have broadly equal populations.

Reconciling this principle with the commitment to maintain the existing share of seats for each state will likely be a key point of debate on the Bills in Parliament.