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SUMMARY OF IMPORTANT EDITORIALS

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TOPICS:-

- 1. Delimitation - a case of to be or not to be**
(GS Paper II Polity)
- 2. Differentiating welfare and development**
(GS Paper III Economy, GS Paper II - Governance)
- 3. Meghalaya's response to crisis in classroom is worth learning from**
(GS Paper II - Governance, GS Paper I - Society)

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1. DELIMITATION - A CASE OF TO BE OR NOT TO BE

(GS Paper II Polity)

This editorial '**Delimitation - a case of to be or not to be**' was published in **The Hindu** on 20th Apr 2026, highlights the **risks** of conducting fresh **delimitation on outdated population data** despite changing migration and demographic realities.

Background and legal basis

- The proposed **Delimitation** exercise sought seat reallocation, boundary redrawing, and women's **reservation** linkage, with Lok Sabha strength proposed at 850.
- The plan relied on **2011 Census** data and emerged during active State-level **electioneering**, which sharpened political opposition to its timing.
- Articles **82** and **170(3)** require post-Census readjustment of seats and constituency **boundaries** across States after each Census.
- Early **delimitation** in 1950-51 used estimated population figures because the first general election could not await final **Census** completion.
- Fresh **readjustment** followed the 1951, 1961, and 1971 Censuses, but the 1971-based **delimitation** was completed only in 1976.
- The **Forty-Second Amendment** froze delimitation amid population-control policy, preventing low-growth States from losing relative **representation**.

Why the present approach is flawed

- The **freeze** ended in 2001, but the Vajpayee government extended seat-freeze while allowing territorial **redrawing** to restore intra-State population parity.
- The **Eighty-Fourth Amendment** extended the freeze until the first Census after 2026 to sustain incentives for population **stabilisation**.
- That policy assumed **population growth** would stabilise across States within 25 years, but the delayed **2021 Census** itself remains unfinished.
- Large-scale **migration**, especially rural-to-urban movement, has altered constituency density, weakening the relevance of old population **benchmarks**.
- Using **2011 data** for future delimitation means the exercise would rest on 15-year-old **population** figures needing correction or updating.
- Even if constituency **parity** existed in 2011, there is no assurance it would survive by the time delimitation is actually **implemented**.

Constitutional and representational concerns

- Article **81(2)** requires the seat-population ratio to remain, as far as practicable, uniform across each **State**.
- A narrow reading of **population** alone overlooks broader constitutional support for preserving each State's relative **representation** in Parliament.
- Since seat numbers are expected to rise substantially, delimitation may permit additional **markers** beyond population without prior-era numerical **constraints**.
- The editorial implies stronger **States** strengthen the Union, so representational redesign should not mechanically privilege raw **demography** alone.

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Federal consequences of demographic redistribution

- **Representation imbalance:** **Uttar Pradesh** already has 80 Lok Sabha seats, so further seat gains may look like durable demographic dominance.
- **Population-control dilemma:** States like **Kerala** and **Tamil Nadu**, with below-replacement fertility, may feel penalised despite stronger demographic transition.
- **Regional mistrust:** This fear is visible in **Tamil Nadu**, where delimitation has been publicly framed as a federal fairness issue.
- **Fiscal implications:** Political weight can shape fiscal bargaining, as seen when the **15th Finance Commission** used 2011 population but added demographic performance.
- **Federal cohesion:** A sharp seat shift may leave some States feeling weaker within the **Union**, despite equal constitutional status. This concern has figured in the current delimitation debate.
- **National integration:** If **delimitation** appears formally valid but regionally unequal, it can weaken long-term trust in national institutions.

2. DIFFERENTIATING WELFARE AND DEVELOPMENT

(GS Paper III Economy, GS Paper II - Governance)

This editorial '**Differentiating welfare and development**' was published in **The Hindu** on 20th Apr 2026, highlights the **need to distinguish** immediate welfare from long-term development while treating both as complementary in public policy.

Conceptual distinction and policy confusion

- In democratic **politics**, development is projected as an electoral **promise** tied to growth, infrastructure, jobs, and services.
- Such **development** rhetoric can obscure distributional **concerns**, mask inequality, and reduce complex socio-economic problems to slogans.
- The core confusion lies in conflating **welfare** with **development** and misunderstanding their differing time horizons.
- Welfare denotes immediate **redistributive** support like food security, income aid, and basic **services** for reducing vulnerability.
- Development denotes long-term **structural** transformation through growth, productivity gains, and expanded human **capabilities**.
- In India, large-scale **social protection** often coexists with ambitions of rapid **economic** growth, blurring boundaries between the two.

How development actually unfolds

- Welfare is usually short-term and **consumption-oriented**, while development is long-term and **production-oriented**.
- A coherent approach must treat **welfare** and **development** as complementary rather than interchangeable policy categories.
- Fiscal **constraints** and efficiency concerns create tensions when welfare provision appears to compete with development **objectives**.
- Excessive **redistribution** can weaken incentives and crowd out productive **investment** if poorly designed.
- Welfare outcomes depend heavily on programme **design** and implementation **quality**, since leakages and exclusion reduce effectiveness.
- Political claims of quick **development** confuse visible short-term outputs with genuine long-term **transformation**.
- Development is an incremental **process** involving cumulative change in productivity, institutions, and social **outcomes** over decades.
- Sustainable **development** depends on institutions, rules, norms, and state **capacity**, not episodic project success alone.
- The **capability** approach stresses education, health, and inclusion as gradual expansion of human **freedoms** through sustained public action.
- This view rejects judging **development** through immediate outcomes or electoral **cycles** and sees it as path-dependent change.

Risks of welfare populism and the proper balance

- Public **goods** like schooling, health systems, infrastructure, and rule of **law** support more durable development than populist transfers.
- Such **public goods** raise productivity and create broad positive **externalities**, making their impact cumulative and inclusive.
- Populist **welfarism** like free electricity, loan waivers, or cash **handouts** prioritises immediate consumption and electoral gain.
- These measures may offer short-term **relief** but often fail to expand productive **capacity**.
- When overused, such **transfers** strain public **finances** and can crowd out investment in public goods.
- Well-designed **welfare** such as nutrition support, employment guarantees, or basic income floors can strengthen human **capabilities**.
- The problem is not **welfare** itself but fiscally unsustainable and politically motivated **populism** that substitutes for development.
- Policymakers must build **welfare systems** that are fiscally sustainable, institutionally robust, and aligned with long-term **goals**.
- The editorial's final concern is that **election manifestos** often privilege short-term political **gains** over enduring economic capacity.

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Political economy of electoral promises and policy choices

- **Electoral incentives:** Democratic competition often rewards visible transfers, as seen in **PM-KISAN** and Karnataka's **Gruha Lakshmi**, over slower institutional reform.
- **Visibility bias:** Welfare gains are quickly felt through **₹6,000 PM-KISAN** or **₹2,000 Gruha Lakshmi**, while productivity gains emerge slowly and market poorly.
- **Manifesto distortion:** This asymmetry lets parties package welfare as development, as seen in Karnataka's broader **Five Guarantees** political framing.
- **Budgetary pressure:** When politics privileges short-term schemes, spending can shift from public goods even though States maintained **capex** near 2.4 per cent of GDP in FY25.

- **Governance short-termism:** Frequent elections favour quick symbolic delivery, as seen in the post-election rollout of **Gruha Lakshmi** in August 2023.
- **Reform challenge:** The real test is aligning **income support** with long-term investment, because welfare alone cannot produce durable structural transformation.

3. MEGHALAYA'S RESPONSE TO CRISIS IN CLASSROOM IS WORTH LEARNING FROM

(GS Paper II - Governance, GS Paper I - Society)

This editorial 'Meghalaya's response to crisis in classroom is worth learning from' was published in **Indian Express** on 20th Apr 2026, highlights how Meghalaya's **early childhood development model** addresses the learning crisis through integrated, decentralised, and science-based intervention.

Learning crisis and early childhood context

- The global **learning crisis** is severe, with the **World Bank** estimating nearly 70 per cent of children in LMICs cannot read simple text by age 10.
- The editorial argues **literacy** failures reflect wider **governance** gaps, since foundational learning is shaped before formal schooling begins.
- In India, stronger **Anganwadis** and initiatives like **ECCE kits** in Uttar Pradesh reflect a shift towards early-years intervention.
- Meghalaya's case is especially important because nearly one-fifth of its population is under six, making **early childhood** central to its **development** path.
- The State also faces intersecting **health risks** such as maternal mortality, anaemia, weak antenatal care, poverty, remoteness, and low **trust** in health systems.
- Meghalaya's **ECD Mission** responds by treating nutrition, health, and developmental delays as interconnected rather than isolated **social-sector** problems.

Developmental science and integrated intervention

- The editorial draws on **Harvard** research showing brain **development** begins before birth and is fastest in the first five years.
- Early **neural circuits** for language, cognition, and emotional regulation form sequentially, creating either strong or fragile **foundations** for later life.

- Adequate **nutrition**, responsive caregiving, safety, and early learning opportunities strengthen development, while deprivation and chronic **stress** weaken it.
- Late **intervention** is both inefficient and inequitable because developmental deficits deepen over time and become harder to **reverse**.
- The **Nurturing Care Framework** identifies five linked pillars: health, nutrition, caregiving, safety, and **early learning**.
- The editorial notes such **early-childhood** systems in LMICs remain fragmented, reactive, and poorly **integrated** despite high long-term returns.

Meghalaya model and governance lessons

- Meghalaya's **GMCD** supports early identification of developmental delays among children aged 1-42 months through caregiver-centred **dialogue**.
- Trained **frontline workers** such as ASHAs, ANMs, Anganwadi workers, nurses, and paediatricians assess children in natural **relational** settings.
- This model treats **caregivers** as co-observers and experts, avoiding rigid testing or sterile clinical **checklists**.
- Early **identification** enables low-cost home-based support that can significantly improve children's developmental **trajectories**.
- Preliminary **GMCD data** is encouraging: over 80 per cent showed no visible delay, about 12 per cent needed **follow-up** support.
- The model also shifts from top-down **delivery** to decentralised **leadership** through Village Health Councils and Self-Help Groups.
- Its strength lies in combining **developmental science**, system integration, and decentralised implementation within one scalable **governance** framework.

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Replicability challenges and lessons for other States

- **Capacity constraint:** Replication may falter where **Anganwadi** systems are weak, even though over 8.55 lakh workers have been trained nationally.
- **Trust deficit:** Community-led models work better where frontline systems enjoy local trust, unlike areas with weak uptake of public **health** and welfare services.
- **Convergence difficulty:** Replication needs tight **coordination** across nutrition, health, and early learning, yet **Poshan 2.0** itself was created to address this fragmentation.

- **Resource sustainability:** Scaling needs steady funding and usable tools, because the **Poshan Tracker** now monitors over 14 lakh Anganwadi Centres and nearly 9 crore beneficiaries.
- **Context sensitivity:** Meghalaya's model cannot be copied mechanically, since **NEP 2020** itself stresses home language and local context in early childhood learning.
- **Policy lesson:** Successful replication needs adaptive design and local ownership, because States, not the Centre, handle day-to-day **implementation** under **Saksham Anganwadi** and Poshan 2.0.