



Overseas Citizenship of India

Why in News

Kartarpur Corridor is accessible to the Persons of Indian origin holding the Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) card.

Overseas Citizenship of India

▪ Definition

- The **Ministry of Home Affairs** defines an OCI as a person who:
 - Was a citizen of India on or after 26th January 1950; or
 - Was eligible to become a citizen of India on 26th January 1950; or
 - Is a child or grandchild of such a person, among other eligibility criteria.
- According to **Section 7A of the OCI card rules**, an applicant is not eligible for the OCI card if he, his parents or grandparents have ever been a citizen of Pakistan or Bangladesh.
- The category was **introduced by the government in 2005**. The Government of India via Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2015 merged the Person of Indian Origin (PIO) category with OCI category in 2015.

▪ Benefits to OCI Cardholders

- OCI cardholders can **enter India multiple times**, get a multipurpose lifelong visa to visit India, and are exempt from registering with Foreigners Regional Registration Office (FRRO).
- If an individual is registered as an OCI for a period of five years, he/she is **eligible to apply for Indian citizenship**.
- At all Indian international airports, OCI cardholders are provided with **special immigration counters**.
- OCI cardholders can open special bank accounts in India, buy the non-farm property and exercise ownership rights and can also apply for a Permanent Account Number (PAN) card.

▪ Limitations

- OCI cardholders **do not get voting rights, cannot hold a government job** and purchase agricultural or farmland.
- They cannot travel to restricted areas without government permission.

Constitutional Provisions

- The Constitution deals with citizenship from **Articles 5 to 11 under Part II**. However, it contains neither any permanent nor any elaborate provisions in this regard.
- It only **identifies the persons who became citizens of India** on 26th January 1950 (i.e. when the Constitution commenced).
- It empowers the Parliament to enact a law to provide for **matters relating to citizenship**. Accordingly, the Parliament has enacted the **Citizenship Act, 1955**, which has been recently amended in 2015.

Person of Indian Origin

- A Person of Indian Origin (PIO) means a **foreign citizen** (except a national of Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, China, Iran, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and Nepal)
 - Who at any time held an Indian passport or
 - Who or either of their parents/ grandparents/ great grandparents were born and permanently resident in India as defined in Government of India Act, 1935 and other territories that became part of India thereafter or
 - Who is a spouse of a citizen of India or a PIO.
- PIO category was **merged with OCI category in 2015**.

[Source: IE](#)

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