

Overseas Citizen of India (OCI)

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Overseas Citizen of India (OCI): Strengthening Diaspora Bonds

Context

- During his official visit to **Trinidad and Tobago**, the **Prime Minister of India** announced that individuals of **Indian origin up to the sixth generation** residing in the country will now be eligible to apply for the **Overseas Citizen of India (OCI)** card.
 - This step is aimed at deepening India's engagement with its **diaspora communities**, especially those with historical ties through indentured labour migration.
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About Overseas Citizen of India (OCI)

- OCI is a **permanent residency status** granted to **foreign nationals of Indian origin**.
 - It enables them to **live, work, and travel in India** without requiring a visa.
 - Though it does **not offer dual citizenship**, it provides several comparable benefits to those of Indian citizens.
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Background

- **Launched in: August 2005**
- **Legal basis:** Introduced under the **Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2005**
- **Administered by:** **Ministry of Home Affairs**, Government of India

Objective

- To build **stronger institutional and emotional ties** between India and its diaspora
 - To allow foreign citizens of Indian origin to **participate in India's economic, educational, and cultural spheres** without becoming full citizens
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Eligibility Criteria (As per Section 7A of Citizenship Act, 1955)

Foreign citizens who:

- Were **Indian citizens on or after 26 January 1950**
- Were **eligible for Indian citizenship on 26 January 1950**
- Belonged to a **territory that became part of India after 15 August 1947**

Their descendants:

- Children
- Grandchildren
- Great-grandchildren

Minor children:

- If **one or both** parents are **Indian citizens**

Spouses:

- Foreign spouses of Indian citizens or OCI holders
- Marriage must have subsisted for **at least 2 years**

Not eligible if:

- The applicant or their ancestors were ever citizens of **Pakistan, Bangladesh**, or any **country notified** by the Indian government
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Key Features of the OCI Card

- **Multiple-entry, lifelong visa** to India
- **No requirement for police reporting**, even for extended stays
- Permission to **work and study in India** without a separate visa
- **Parity with NRIs** in:
 - **Education**: Eligibility, admissions, and fee structures
 - **Financial investments**
 - **Property ownership**: Can purchase **residential and commercial property**
- **Cannot purchase agricultural land**
- **No political rights**:
 - Cannot **vote** in Indian elections
 - Cannot hold **constitutional posts** or government jobs
- **Application process**:
 - Entire process is conducted through the **online OCI portal**
 - Includes facilities for **status tracking**