

NATIONAL SOCIAL ISSUES- WOMEN, POPULATION, URBANISATION, EMPOWERMENT ETC**Bill to help Transgender introduced in Lok Sabha**

The Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2019, was introduced by Social Justice and Empowerment Minister in Lok Sabha. The Bill has defined transgenders and has ensured family life for transgender children, made provisions for sex reassignment surgeries, psychological counselling and protection against any form of discrimination against transgender people.

Highlights of the Bill

- The Transgender Persons Bill gives a person the right to choose to be identified as a man, woman or transgender, irrespective of sex reassignment surgery and hormonal therapy.
- The government has ensured that a person does not have to appear before a district screening committee to be declared a transgender (This was part of earlier draft that received criticism from human rights activists). The new bill has recognised a person's "right to self-perceived gender identity".
- The bill de-criminalised begging by transgenders.
- The bill provides for major education, social security and health facilities for transgender people. The government has decided to pay for medical care facility including sex reassignment surgery and hormonal therapy for transgender people through a health insurance scheme.
- The Bill also provides protection for transgender children. Section 12 (1) says: "No child shall be separated from parents or immediate family on the ground of being a transgender."

CONSTITUTION AND POLITY**Supreme Court questions the need for re-verification of NRC**

The Centre and the State of Assam had urged the Supreme Court more time to conduct sample re-verification process of NRC. However, the Supreme Court has questioned the need for re-verification of NRC.

NRC: National register of citizens is a register containing names of all genuine Indians residing in India. Assam faced influx from Bangladesh, to remove the illegal migration from neighbouring countries NRC as prepared in 1951.

Benefits of NRC:

- Detection of illegal immigrants, inclusion will be a shield against harassment and a ticket to enjoying all the constitutional rights and safeguards and the benefits of government schemes.
- To safeguard the indigenous population and civilization.
- Illegal activities like terrorism, human trafficking, drug trafficking can be checked.
- To safeguard Voting rights and properties such as land and house.

Controversies related to the National Register of Citizens (NRC):

- Laborious process: Adding a person to NRC is complex procedure because of presenting many documents and layers of verification.
- Document verification: "Family tree verification" has become difficult process for left out children.
- Rejection of certificate: More than 40 lakh people are rejected for panchayath residency certificates.
- Citizenship related: Failed to ensure legal clarity over the manner in which the claims of citizenship could be decided.
- Role of Supreme Court: lack of monitoring process, inability to comprehend political and policy actions in case of loss of citizenship.
- Huge population: Given the size of India's population, implementation of the NRC will be a mammoth task and demands a detailed analysis.

Criticism of the NRC:

- The first report was announced on December 31-January 1, 2017, the removal of 40 lakh people leads to a major social and political crisis.

- The mass insecurity and social crisis stalking the 40 lakh people of Assam.
- Many people are in stake who lives in strategic and sensitive border state. Their documents are being ambiguous.
- Assam has a peculiar problem of villages getting ravaged, or disappearing, due to annual floods unleashed by the fiery Brahamaputra. Documents get destroyed, geographies shift, addresses change.
- Several cases of transparent injustice whereby families have been divided – some declared Doubtful Voters and foreigners, others as bonafide citizens.
- Widespread perception that specifically linguistic and religious minorities are being targeted – namely, Bengali speaking Muslims and Hindus.

Conclusion

- It is important and essential for the union government to proactively come out with an equitable, predictable and transparent plan on the way forward, for those who will be identified as ‘foreigners’. The left out from the NRC must be handled carefully on humanitarian basis.

GOVERNANCE- WELFARE SCHEMES, E-GOVERNANCE, SERVICES ETC.

World Bank study on PMGSY

A recent independent World Bank assessment of the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY) has noted that the scheme led to a shift from farm to non-farm employment particularly among men in the habitations studied between 2009 and 2017. The report also noted that due to improved connectivity there has been a positive impact on child immunisation, childbirths in hospitals, and schooling of both boys and girls in rural areas

PMGSY

- PMGSY was launched in 2000. The scheme is under the aegis of Ministry of Rural Development.
- It aims to provide connectivity, by way of an All-weather Road to the eligible unconnected habitations of designated population size (500+ in plain areas and 250+ in North-East, hill, tribal and desert areas).
- Recently, the government has approved the launch of Phase-3 of Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY).
- Under the PMGSY-III Scheme, the government has proposed to consolidate roads measuring 1.25 lakh km in length in the states.
- Further, construction of bridges of up to 150m in plain areas and 200 m in Himalayan and north eastern states have been proposed.

Happiness Department of Madhya Pradesh

- It has always been felt that material prosperity alone can never be the yardstick of measuring happiness and wellbeing. For a holistic and happy human existence, inner wellbeing is of utmost significance along with our material advancement. People need to be exposed to well researched behavioural tools and time tested ethical practices, which would help them stay positive, sustain adversities and lead fulfilling balanced lives.
- Madhya Pradesh has set a precedence in the country to have a government organization – Rajya Anand Sansthan (State Happiness Department) – dedicated towards the aforesaid purpose.

Rajya Anand Sansthan

- RAS came into existence for this purpose in August 2016 and has since been engaged in providing tools and techniques of incorporating positivity and joyful healthy habits for holistic growth and overall peace.
- Soothing the tempers of government officials since its inception, the Rajya Anand Sansthan has now opened its doors to the general public.

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS

India China to have Joint Military Exercise in Meghalaya

India and China will hold the 8th edition of the annual military exercise Hand in Hand in December 2019. The exercise will take place at Umroi, Meghalaya. It is at the company level, meaning around 100-120 infantry troops from both sides will be participating. It will be based on counter-terrorism and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations.

Hand-in-Hand:

- Hand-in-Hand military exercises are tactical-level operations that aims to build closer relations between Indian and Chinese armies. The first Hand in Hand exercise was held in Kunming, China in 2007.
- The 6th edition of the exercise was held in Pune in 2016. The 7th edition was held in Chengdu region of China in 2018.
- The India-China Hand-in-Hand military exercise was cancelled in 2017 amid the heightened tensions between the two countries following the Doklam standoff.

India warns WTO's appeals body may collapse

India has warned of the collapse of the World Trade Organization's (WTO) Appellate Body. This statement came as the US has repeatedly blocked the selection complaining the Appellate Body failed to follow the rules in the Dispute Settlement Understanding.

WTO:

- The World Trade Organization (WTO) is an intergovernmental organization that is concerned with the regulation of international trade between nations.
- The WTO officially commenced in 1995 under the Marrakesh Agreement signed by 124 nations replacing the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). Currently, it has 164 members and 22 observer governments with Afghanistan and Liberia being the latest to join.
- The Appellate Body of the WTO was established in 1995 with its seat in Geneva, Switzerland. It is a standing body of seven persons. It hears appeals from reports issued by panels in disputes brought by WTO Members.
- The Appellate Body can uphold, modify or reverse the legal findings and conclusions of a panel. The Appellate Body Reports once adopted by the Dispute Settlement Body (DSB) must be accepted by the parties to the dispute.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY- EVERYDAY SCIENCE, SPACE, NUCLEAR, DEFENCE ETC

Govt bans use of antibiotic Colistin in animal feed, poultry, aqua farms

The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has issued an order prohibiting the manufacture, sale and distribution of colistin and its formulations for food producing animals, poultry and aqua farms.

Colistin:

- Colistin is a polypeptide antibiotic from the group of polymyxins. It is predominantly used in veterinary medicine in the treatment of intestinal diseases as well as other infections. The drug has been highly misused in India's poultry industry.
- In humans, it is used as a last line therapy to treat infections caused by multidrug-resistant Gram-negative bacteria. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), Colistin is a "reserve" antibiotic.

Moon mission to try landing on Sept 7

- ISRO has announced that Chandrayaan-2's targeted landing date on the lunar South Pole is September 7th. The launch of Chandrayaan-2, which was scheduled to be launched on July 15th, was aborted after a technical snag in the launch vehicle system- GSLV Mk-III rocket.
- The moon landing has been planned during the particular period as the landing site will remain well illuminated by sunlight over the next one month while the Lander and Rover could work and collect data. Also, there is no lunar eclipse during this period.

Chandrayan-2

- The Chandrayaan-2 is India's second lunar mission. It is a fully indigenous mission. Chandrayaan-2 will comprise of an Orbiter, Lander named 'Vikram' and Rover named 'Pragyan'

- The orbiter will circle the moon and provide information about its surface, while the lander will make a soft landing on the surface and send out the rover. The rover will be used mostly for in situ experiments.
- The lunar mission will carry out extensive three-dimensional mapping of the topography of the lunar South Pole region. It will also determine its elemental composition and seismic activity.
- The mission would also try to assess the abundance and distribution of water on the lunar surface.

Kerala to set up nation's first Space Systems Park

The Kerala government will set up the country's first Space Systems Park at the upcoming Knowledge City in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala. The project will be implemented by the State Government's Electronics and IT Department.

- The facility will seek to attract global start-ups working in the space sector and also make it as a major manufacturing hub for space-related technology, research and development.
- The Space Park will also house Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Knowledge Centre and Space Museum being developed by the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC) as a memorial to the former President and top space scientist.
- Further, other major centers of ISRO located in the city will help create a robust ecosystem for space technology applications and research.

DEFENCE**Revamp of Army Head Quarters (AHQ)**

Army has initiated the process of reforming its Head quarter structure.

Objective of the Plan:

- Ensure holistic integration of all divisions of army
- Enhance the operational and functional efficiency
- Optimise budget expenditure,
- Facilitate force modernisation and
- Address aspirations of the army personnel.

ODISHA DEVELOPMENT**Odisha Govt has to borrow in bulk**

- The state government will have to borrow Rs 23,584 crore from different sources and repay Rs 4,707 crore during 2019-20 financial year to implement several welfare schemes including KALIA and Biju Pucca Ghar Yojana though the finances have not looked up.
- Though the government has placed a Budget of Rs 1,39,000 crore for 2019-20, it is heavily dependent on Odisha's share in Central taxes and grants, which is likely to put a heavy burden on the State exchequer.
- While the state share in Central taxes has been estimated at Rs 39,207 crore, the figure is likely to change as Odisha Budget was placed in the Assembly before the Union Budget. Besides, Central grants have been estimated at Rs 30,559 crore for implementation of different schemes.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

There is no substitute for hard work. There is no shortcut to success.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns: What is National Register of Citizens (NRC)? What impact it can bring in Assam and what are challenges to it?

Ans: National Register of Citizens, 1951 is a register prepared after the conduct of the Census of 1951 in respect of each village, showing the houses or holdings in a serial order and indicating against each house or holding the number and names of persons staying therein.

The NRC was published only once in 1951. The issue of its update assumed importance as Assam witnessed large-scale illegal migration from erstwhile East Pakistan and, after 1971, from present-day Bangladesh.

Impact

- An updated NRC is likely to put an end to speculations about the actual number of illegal migrants in Assam in particular and the country in general.
- It will provide a verified dataset to carry out meaningful debates and implement calibrated policy measures.
- Publication of an updated NRC is expected to deter future migrants from Bangladesh from entering Assam illegally.
- The publication of the draft NRC has already created a perception that staying in Assam without valid documentation will attract detention/jail term and deportation.
- More importantly, illegal migrants may find it even more difficult to procure Indian identity documents and avail all the rights and benefits due to all Indian citizens.
- Inclusion of their names in the NRC will provide respite to all those Bengali speaking people in Assam who have been, hitherto, suspected as being Bangladeshis.

Challenges

- Flawed Process - People who found themselves on the first list that was released on January 1, 2018, didn't find their names in the second. Even the family of a former President of India did not mention on the list.
- The parallel processes of NRC, the voters list of the Election Commission, and the Foreigners' Tribunals with the help of the Assam Border Police, have led to utter chaos, as none of these agencies are sharing information with each other.
- Though the draft provides a window for re-verification, due to large number of people being excluded from the list, it will be very difficult to physically verify all of them.
- Since such 'non citizens' can resort to judicial relief to substantiate their citizenship claim, it can lead to overburdening of judiciary which already reels under large number of pending cases.
- There is uncertainty about the future of those left out from the list.
- Expelling them to Bangladesh is not an option since Dhaka has never accepted that they are its citizens or that there is a problem of illegal immigration. In the absence of a formal agreement, India cannot forcibly push the illegal migrants back into Bangladesh.
- Moreover, raising this issue can also jeopardise relations with Dhaka. Such an attempt would not only damage bilateral relations but also sully the country's image internationally.
- Apart from deportation, the other option is large scale detention camps - which are an unlikely option for a civilised democracy like India.
- Another option is instituting work permits, which would give them limited legal rights to work but ensure they have no political voice. However, it is not clear what will be the fate of children of such individuals.
- With no end to uncertainty, NRC seems to be a process without an end.

Way Forward

- India, as a country which follows the ideology of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam', should not be hasty in taking decisions that can disenfranchise her citizens – contradicting its centuries-followed values.
- The need of the hour is that Union Government should clearly chart out the course of action regarding the fate of excluded people from final NRC data and political parties should refrain from coloring the entire NRC process through electoral prospects that may snowball in to communal violence.
- There is a need for a robust mechanism of legal support for the four million who have to prove their citizenship to India with their limited means.

DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS BASED MCQS

1. Which of the following is/are the provisions of the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Bill, 2019 introduced recently in parliament?
 1. It recognized transgender as the 3rd gender.
 2. It decriminalizes begging by transgenders.
 Select the correct answer from the codes given below
 - (a) 1 only
 - (b) 2 only
 - (c) Both 1 and 2
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2
2. Consider the following statements w.r.t the National Register of Citizens.
 1. NRC was prepared as a consequence of the Bangladesh Liberation War.
 2. Its main objective was to safeguard the rights of indigenous population.
 Which of the statements is/are incorrect?
 - (a) 1 only
 - (b) 2 only
 - (c) Both 1 and 2
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2**
3. Consider the following statements w.r. t the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana.
 1. PMGSY was launched in 2000
 2. It is under the aegis of Ministry of Rural Development.
 Which of the statements is/are incorrect?
 - (a) 1 only
 - (b) 2 only
 - (c) Both 1 and 2
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2**
4. A Happiness Department has been created by which of the following state govt?
 - (a) Rajasthan
 - (b) Gujarat
 - (c) Haryana
 - (d) Madhya Pradesh
5. Hand-in-Hand joint Military Exercise is held between India and which other country?
 - (a) Bhutan
 - (b) China**
 - (c) Nepal
 - (d) Myanmar
6. Consider the following statements w.r.t the WTO?
 1. WTO officially commenced in 1995 under the Marrakesh Agreement
 2. The seat of it's appellate body is in Geneva.
 Which of the statements is/are correct?
 - (a) 1 only
 - (b) 2 only
 - (c) Both 1 and 2
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2
7. Consider the following statements w.r.t Chandrayan-2
 1. It is a fully indigenous mission.
 2. It comprises of an Orbiter, Lander named 'Vikram' and Rover named 'Pragyan'
 Which of the statements is/are incorrect?
 - (a) 1 only
 - (b) 2 only
 - (c) Both 1 and 2
 - (d) Neither 1 nor 2**
8. India's first Space System Parks is to be established in which place?
 - (a) Thiruanantapuram**
 - (b) Bengaluru
 - (c) Srikakulam
 - (d) Sriharikota