

2019



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CURRENT AFFAIRS

POLITY AND NATION

9th December- 14th December



BusinessLine



1. Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019

Why in News?

The Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB) became law after receiving the President's assent. It amends the Citizenship Act, 1955.

- Entry 17, List 1 under the **Seventh Schedule** speaks about Citizenship, naturalisation and aliens. Thus, the power to grant citizenship lies with the Ministry of Home Affairs.

About Citizenship Amendment Act

- The Act grants citizenship to individuals who are Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Christian, Jain, or Parsi who entered India from Pakistan, Bangladesh, or Afghanistan by the cut-off date of **December 31, 2014**.
- The law says that on acquiring citizenship:
 - Such persons shall be deemed to be citizens of India from the date of their entry into India.
 - All legal proceedings against them in respect of their illegal migration or citizenship will be closed.
- **Exception:** It protects the constitutional guarantee given to North Eastern States covered under the **Sixth Schedule** to the Constitution and the statutory protection given to areas covered under "**The Inner Line**" system of the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation, 1873.
 - The "Inner Line Permit" regulates the travel of Indians to **Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, and Nagaland**.
- **Citizenship By Naturalisation:**
 - Under The Citizenship Act, 1955, one of the requirements for citizenship by naturalisation is that the applicant must have resided in India during the last 12 months, as well as for 11 of the previous 14 years.
 - It relaxes the 11-year requirement under the principle to **5 years** for such persons.
- It adds another ground for cancelling **Overseas Citizen of India (OCI)** registration that is a violation of any law notified by the central government.

Issues with the Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019

- The provisions of the law do not extend to illegal Muslim migrants. The law doesn't have a provision for Muslim sects like Shias and Ahmediyas who also face persecution in Pakistan.

- It also does not talk about other minority communities in the three neighbouring countries, such as Jews, Bahais, etc.
- It makes illegal migrants eligible for citizenship on the basis of religion; violating **Article 14** of the Constitution which guarantees the right to equality.
- The new law violates the **Assam Accord of 1985**, which sets **March 24, 1971** as the cutoff for Indian citizenship. This is also the cut-off for the **National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam**, whose final version was published this year.
 - This negates the NRC exercise and also has also caused apprehensions that as a result of the Act the burden of illegal migrants will be passed on the state alone.
- It would significantly affect Northeastern states that are grappled by the problem of illegal migration from neighboring countries.
- It allows cancellation of OCI registration for violation of any law. This is a wide ground that may cover a range of violations, including minor offences (e.g. parking in a no parking zone).

2. India ranks 129 Human Development Index report:UNDP

Why in News?

- India ranked 129 among 189 countries in the Human Development Index (HDI), 2019.
- Despite lifting 271 million people out of poverty between 2005-15, India still remains home to 28% of the world's poor.

Human Development Index (HDI) 2019

- HDI is part of the **Human Development Report tilted-Beyond income, beyond averages, beyond today: Inequalities in Human Development in the 21st Century.**

Key Findings

- **Top three ranked countries-**
 1. Norway
 2. Switzerland
 3. Ireland
- Burundi is at the bottom.
- India's HDI value increased by 50% (from 0.431 to 0.647), which places it above the average for other South Asian countries (0.642).

- Among India's neighbours, Sri Lanka (71) and China (85) are higher up the rank scale while Bhutan (134), Bangladesh (135), Myanmar (145), Nepal (147), Pakistan (152) and Afghanistan (170) were ranked lower on the list.
- South Asia was the fastest growing region in human development progress followed by East Asia and the Pacific at 43%.

Inequality-Adjusted Human Development Index

- The IHDI indicates percentage loss in HDI due to inequality.
- India's position worsened by one position to 130. Although, the IHDI score has improved from 0.468 in 2018.

Gender Development Index

- GDI measures disparities on the HDI by gender.
- India is only marginally better than the South Asian average on the Gender Development Index (0.829 vs. 0.828).

Gender Inequality Index (GII)

- GII presents a composite measure of gender inequality using three dimensions:
 - Reproductive health,
 - Empowerment and
 - The labour market
- In GII, India is at 122 out of 162 countries. Neighbours China (39), Sri Lanka (86), Bhutan (99), Myanmar (106) were placed above India.
- The report notes that group-based inequalities persist, especially affecting women and girls and no place in the world has gender equality.
 - To achieve gender equality by 2030 as per the UN's Sustainable Development Goals. It forecasts that it may take 202 years to close the gender gap in economic opportunity.
- The report presents a new "social norms index" indicating how prejudices and social beliefs obstruct gender equality, which shows that only 14% of women and 10% of men worldwide have no gender bias.

Multidimensional Poverty Index

- MPI captures the multiple deprivations that people in developing countries face in their health, education and standard of living.
- India accounts for 28% of the 1.3 billion multidimensional poor.

- The report states that as the number of people coming out of poverty is increasing, the world is veering towards another type of poverty. The old inequalities were based on access to health services and education whereas the next generation of poverty is based on technology, education and climate.
 - India has both types of poverty. Even as Indians continue to face a lack of access to healthcare and education, many others are becoming poor based on the new criteria.

Human Development Index (HDI)

- HDI is published by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).
- It ranks countries based on their performance in the key areas of-
 - Life expectancy at birth
 - Education
 - Per capita income
- Each of these dimensions is given a weightage of 1/3. The human development index is a sum total of the weights assigned to all these dimensions.
- These rankings are based on a score between 0 to 1 that a country earns from its record in the key areas of human development.
- The closer a score is to one, the greater is the level of human development.

3. Anglo-Indian Quota

Why in News?

Parliament passed the Constitution (126th Amendment) Bill, extending reservation for SC/STs, in Lok Sabha and assemblies by 10 years; the bill however excludes Anglo-Indians from extension of reservation to Lok Sabha and state Assemblies which was for 70 years and expires in 2020.

Anglo-Indians

- The term Anglo-Indian first appeared in the Government of India Act, 1935.

Constitutional Provision

- **Article 331**- Provides nomination for two members of the Anglo-Indian community in Lok-Sabha by the President.
- **Article 333** - Provides nomination for a member of the Anglo-Indian community in the Legislative Assembly by the Governor.
- **Article 366 (2)** - An Anglo-Indian means a person whose father or any of whose other male progenitors in the male line is or was of European descent but who is domiciled within the territory of India.

- **10th Schedule:** According to it, Anglo-Indian members of Lok Sabha and state Assemblies can take the membership of any party within six months of their nomination.

The Anglo-Indian members enjoy the same powers as others, but they cannot vote in the Presidential election because they are nominated by the President.

4. Special Protection Group Bill, 2019

Why in News?

The Special Protection Group (Amendment) Bill, 2019 was passed by the Parliament. The Bill amends the Special Protection Group (SPG) Act, 1988.

- The 1988 Act provides for the constitution and regulation of the Special Protection Group (SPG) to provide security to the Prime Minister, former Prime Ministers, and their immediate family members.

Special Protection Group

- SPG also provides security to former Prime Ministers and their immediate family members. SPG was formed in 1985 after the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, on the recommendation of **Birbal Nath Committee**.
- Later on it became a **statutory body** under **Special Protection Group Act, 1988**.
- It is an armed force of the Union for providing proximate security to:
 - Prime Minister of India.
 - Former PM of India.
 - Immediate family members of PM and former PMs.
- It is a pooled force, drawing personnel from **Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF)**, **Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP)**, and **Central Industrial Security Force (CISF)**.
- It is headed by an officer of the rank of Inspector-General (Indian Police Service).
- SPG bill provides security to the Prime Minister, and members of his immediate family residing with him at his official residence.
 - It will also provide security to any former Prime Ministers, and his/her immediate family members residing with him/her **at their official residence**.
 - This security will be provided for a **period of five years** from the date on which he ceases to hold the office of Prime Minister.
 - The Bill also states that if the SPG security is withdrawn from a former Prime Minister, it will also be withdrawn from his immediate family members, **unless the level of threat faced by the immediate family member warrants such security**.

5. Accessible India campaign

Why in News?

- Due to slow progress the deadline for the Accessible India campaign has been extended to March 2020; the Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment informed the Lok Sabha.
- The Campaign aims to make public spaces friendly for persons with disabilities.

Accessible India campaign

- It was launched on International Day of Persons with Disabilities on 3rd December, 2015 by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.
- It aims to achieve universal accessibility for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs).
- The campaign has been divided into three verticals:
 - Built Environment
 - Transport
 - Information & Communication Technology (ICT) ecosystem.

6. Skills Build Platform

Why in News?

The Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE) has launched **Skills Build Platform** in collaboration with International Business Machines Corporation (IBM).

Skills Build Platform

- It is a digital platform developed by IBM enabling holistic learning and aligning it with Skills India Initiative of Government of India.
- It will provide a two-year advanced diploma in Information Technology, Networking and Cloud Computing offered by the Industrial Training Institutes and National Skill Training Institutes.
- It has been launched in alliance with the Directorate General of Training (DGT), Ministry of Skills Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE).
- India is the 4th country to launch it for skill building after the UK, Germany and France.
- It will focus on personalised coaching and experiential learning and will help develop the skills required to join the workforce in “**New Collar**” roles.
 - New Collar roles **focus** more on a **candidate's skills** during the hiring process, rather than his or her level of education.

- A new-collar worker is an individual who develops the technical and soft skills needed to work in technology jobs through non-traditional education paths.

7. National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority hikes prices of essential medicines

Why in News?

The National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority (NPPA) used its emergency powers to raise ceiling prices of 21 essential medicines by 50%.

- These essential medicines include Bacillus Calmette–Guérin (BCG) vaccine, anti-malaria drug Chloroquine, anti-leprosy drug Dapsone.
- The increase in the prices of these key drugs was on account of a sharp rise in the cost of active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs) from China.

National Pharmaceutical Pricing Authority

- It was set up in 1997 under the aegis of the Department of Pharmaceuticals, Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers.
- It aims to revise the prices of controlled bulk drugs and formulations and to enforce prices and availability of medicines in the country, under the Drugs (Prices Control) Order (DPCO), 1995.
- It also monitors the prices of decontrolled drugs in order to keep them at reasonable levels.

Active Pharmaceutical Ingredient (API)

It is the part of drug that produces the medicinal effects.

National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM)

- Essential medicines are those that satisfy the priority health care needs of the population. These are selected with due regard to disease prevalence, evidence on efficacy and safety, and comparative cost-effectiveness.
- The list is prepared by the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

8. Human Rights Day

Why in News?

Human Rights Day is celebrated on the 10th December every year to commemorate the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1948.

Human Rights Day

- **Theme for 2019:** Youth Standing up for Human Rights.

National Human Rights Commission

- It is a statutory body established in 1993 under the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993.
- It is a multi-member body consisting of a chairman and four members.
 - **The chairman:** Retired Chief Justice of India
 - **Members:** Serving or retired judges of the Supreme Court, a serving or retired chief justice of the high court and two persons having knowledge or practical experience with respect to human rights.
 - **Ex-officio Members:** The chairman of the National Commission for Minorities, the National Commission for SCs, the National Commission for STs and the National Commission for Women.
- The chairman and members are appointed by the president on the recommendation of a six-member committee.
- **A six-member committee consisting of -**
 - The Prime-minister
 - The Lok Sabha Speaker
 - The Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha
 - Leaders of the Opposition in both the Houses of Parliament
 - Union Home Minister
- The chairman and members hold office for a term of five years or until they attain the age of 70 years, whichever is earlier.

9. Atal Bhujal Yojana

Why in News?

The Ministry of Jal Shakti informed Lok Sabha about the Atal Bhujal Yojana.

- The 'National Groundwater Management Improvement Program-NGMIP' was announced in the Union Budget for the year 2016-17. The scheme was discontinued in May 2017. Later the scheme was relaunched as 'Atal Bhujal Yojana'.

Atal Bhujal Yojana

- It is a Central Sector Scheme, for sustainable management of ground water resources with community participation.
- The funding pattern is 50:50 between **Government of India and World Bank**.
- It is being implemented by the Ministry of Jal Shakti.
- The scheme envisages active **participation of the communities** in various activities such as:

- Formation of Water User Associations.
- Monitoring and disseminating ground water data.
- Water budgeting.
- Preparation and implementation of Gram-Panchayat wise water security plans.
- The identified over-exploited and water stressed areas for preferred implementation of the scheme fall in the States of:
 - Gujarat
 - Haryana
 - Karnataka
 - Madhya Pradesh
 - Maharashtra
 - Rajasthan
 - Uttar Pradesh

10. Laws on Rape and Sexual Crime in India

Why in News?

There has been an outcry for justice for the victims after the rape and murder of a veterinarian in Hyderabad and the burning of a rape survivor in Unnao, Uttar Pradesh.

Indian Penal Code (IPC)

- ‘Rape’ as a clearly defined offence was first introduced in the **Indian Penal Code in 1860**.
- The codification of Indian laws began with the enactment of the **Charter Act, 1833**, which led to the establishment of the **first Law Commission** under the chairmanship of **Lord Macaulay**.
- **Section 375 of the IPC:**
 - It made punishable the act of sex by a man with a woman if it was done against her will or without her consent.
 - It included sex when her consent has been obtained by putting her or any person in whom she is interested, in fear of death or of hurt.
 - Sex with or without her consent, when she is under 18 years is considered rape.
- **Exception:** sexual intercourse or sexual acts by a man with his wife, the wife not being under 15 years of age, is not rape.
- **Section 376** provided for seven years of jail term to life imprisonment.

Criminal Law (Second Amendment) Act of 1983

- Under the **Indian Evidence Act (section 114A)**, a compulsory statutory presumption has been created that requires the courts to presume that

consent is absent if such a claim is made by the victim. This applied to custodial rape cases.

- In the IPC, **Section 228A** was added which makes it **punishable to disclose the identity of the victim** of certain offences including rape.

Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013

- The amendments were made on the recommendation of the **Justice J.S. Verma Committee**, which was constituted to relook the criminal laws in the country and recommend several changes.
- It widened the definition of rape and made punishment more stringent.
- It provided for the death penalty in rape cases that cause death of the victim or leaves her in a vegetative state.
- The punishment for gang rape was increased to 20 years to life imprisonment from the earlier 10 years to life imprisonment.
- It clearly defined offences such as use of unwelcome physical contact, words or gestures, demand or request for sexual favours, showing pornography against the will of a woman or making sexual remarks and allocated punishment.
- Stalking was made punishable with up to 3 years in jail.
- The offence of acid attack was increased to 10 years of imprisonment.

Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015

- The 'Juvenile' in conflict with law has been redefined as a '**child in conflict with the law**'.
- Children in the age group of 16-18 years **may be tried as adults in cases of heinous offences** after a preliminary assessment by the Juvenile Justice Board.

Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2018

- It for the first time put death penalty as a possible punishment for rape of a girl under 12 years; the minimum punishment is 20 years in jail.
- The minimum jail term for rape, which has remained unchanged since the introduction of the IPC in 1860, was increased from 7 to 10 years.

11. Taj Trapezium Zone

Why in News?

The Supreme Court (SC) permitted Northern Railways to cut over 400 trees in the Taj Trapezium Zone (TTZ) for construction of an additional rail track between Delhi and Agra in lieu of compensatory afforestation.

- The SC in 1996, had banned the use of coal/ coke industries located in the TTZ with a mandate for switching over from coal/ coke to natural gas,

and relocating them outside the TTZ or shutting down in response to a PIL seeking to protect the Taj Mahal from environmental pollution.

Taj Trapezium Zone

- TTZ is so named since it is located around the Taj Mahal and is shaped like a trapezoid.
- It is an area of about 10,400 sq km around the Taj Mahal.
- It is spread over-Agra, Firozabad, Mathura, Hathras, Etah (Uttar-Pradesh) and Bharatpur (Rajasthan).
- It comprises monuments including three World Heritage Sites the Taj Mahal, Agra Fort and Fatehpur Sikri.



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