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Expat Quota Bill Approved in Kuwait

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Why in News

Recently, the legal and legislative committee of **Kuwait's National Assembly** has **approved the draft expat (expatriate) quota bill**.

- According to the bill, **Indians should not exceed 15% of the population** and if it is enacted into law, over 8 lakh Indians could be forced out of Kuwait.
- Kuwait is a country located in the **Persian Gulf region**.

Key Points

- The draft expat quota bill has been **deemed constitutional** and will be transferred to the respective committee so that a comprehensive plan is created.
- Lawmakers and government officials including the Prime Minister of Kuwait have been calling to **reduce the number of expats from 70% to 30%** of the population.
- The draft law will **impose a cap on the number of expats and gradually reduce** them by almost 5% on a yearly basis.

For example, if expats constitute 70% of the population this year, next year it will 65% and 60% in the following year.

- **Reasons Behind the Move:**

- Anti-expat aspirations have been rising in Kuwait since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Foreigners have accounted for the majority of Kuwait's virus cases as the disease spread among migrant workers living in overcrowded housing.

- Kuwait has been working to **reduce its dependence on foreign workers**. It no longer wants to remain an expat-majority nation with its own citizens turning into a minority.

This move is similar to the **USA's decision to extend the 60-day ban on immigrant and non-immigrant worker visas till the end of 2020**.

- Kuwait faces problems in its **population structure** due to huge numbers of expats.

Almost **one-third of the expats are either illiterate or can merely read and write**. They do not contribute to the country's growth and hence, are not needed.

- The oil-price crash has also affected the country's economic conditions.

- **Data Analysis:**

- In Kuwait, expats account for 3 million out of the total population of 4.3 million.
- **Indians constitute the largest expat community** in Kuwait, totalling 1.45 million.
- About 28,000 Indians work in **various government jobs** like nurses, engineers in national oil companies and as scientists.
- Majority of Indians (around 5 lakh) work in the **private sector**.
- There are about 1.16 lakh dependents out of which about 60,000 are students studying in various Indian schools in the country.

India's Perspective

- The Indian community in Kuwait has always played an **important factor in bilateral ties**.
- Indians are present in **all segments of society** in Kuwait and are largely **considered disciplined, hardworking and law-abiding**.
- **Kuwait is a top source of remittances for India**. In 2018, India received nearly USD 4.8 billion from Kuwait as remittances.
- The Indian embassy has been closely following developments related to the proposed legislation. However, **India has so far not made any statement** on the issue.

Persian Gulf Region

- The lands around the Persian Gulf are shared by **eight countries** namely, Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).
- These all eight countries are members of the **United Nations**.
 - UAE, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar, Kuwait are members of the **Gulf Cooperation Council** (GCC).
 - Out of the Persian Gulf countries, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, UAE and Saudi Arabia are members of the **Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries** (OPEC).
- Being **major producers of crude oil and natural gas**, there is a commonality of interest among these countries.

This commonality of interest has given rise to their own prosperity and subsequently, economic-political entanglements among them.



Source: IE