

The Citizenship (Amendment) Bill (CAB) seeks to grant citizenship to non-Muslim refugees from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan. It seeks to amend the Citizenship Act, 1955 to relax the 11-year requirement to 5 years for Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi and Christian refugees.

Why the bill is being opposed

① Makes distinction based on religion

↳ Article 14 of the Constitution guarantees equality to all persons, citizens and foreigners, differentiating on the ground of religion violates the constitution.

↳ Civil Societies term it as "communally motivated humanitarianism".

② Global implications

↳ might stamp the country as an institution of religious oppression and worsen bilateral ties.

③ Enables influx of refugees

↳ contradicts the NRC in Assam

↳ The North-eastern states have a huge problem of infiltration of Bangladeshi illegal immigrants, many of whom are Buddhists and Hindus.

↳ Will stretch the already strained public services and resource availability as we are an already over-populous country.

④ Government hegemony

↳ Provides wide discretion to the government to cancel OCI registrations for many minor offences like parking in a no-parking zone or jumping a red light.

Potential Benefits of the Bill

① Targetted Beneficiaries

↳ The three countries mentioned in the bill are self-proclaimed Islamic states

↳ There have been many reports regarding atrocities on the minorities in these countries.

↳ The bill provides respite to the refugees who have entered the country on or before December 31, 2014.

② Complements the NRC

- ↳ NRC seeks to exclude people who have come into the country but cannot prove their citizenship on the basis of documents and legacy data. The cutoff date for NRC was midnight of March 24, 1971.
- ↳ The immigrants who were unable to prove citizenship now get a chance to argue that they are minorities and faced persecution.
- ↳ Hindus especially, who are persecuted have nowhere to go but India.

Way Forward

- ① Needs to undertake a balancing act between humanitarianism and interests of the indigenous tribal communities of the North-East.
- ② Should also ~~also~~ consider the Muslim groups who are facing persecution like the Ahmadiyas in Pakistan and the Rohingya muslims.
- ③ International relations of India need to be dealt carefully, especially with Bangladesh.
- ④ There has to be a distinction between the two categories of illegal immigrants - the ones who came for better economic opportunities and the other who ran away from atrocities.
- ⑤ The government should give assurance of an expansion of the Inner line permit (ILP).
- ⑥ Security concerns should be allayed and Principle of Refoulment should be considered.

The public ~~is~~ and the media ought to stop painting the bill in the hues of religion and realise that it does not aim to take away anyone's citizenship. The opposition ought to refrain from firing from the shoulders of the ~~leftist~~ students and creating mayhem. India is a secular democratic nation and will always remain so.