High-Level Committee on Demographic Changes (HLCDC) and National Security

Mains: ***GS II - Polity & Governance***

Why in News?

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has issued a 'resolution' to constitute a High-Level Committee on Demographic Changes (HLCDC) to address challenges arising from demographic shifts observed across the country.

What is the Composition and Timeline of the High-Level Committee?

- **Composition -** To ensure an intersectional approach combining jurisprudence, administration, security, and economics, the HLCDC is comprised of eminent domain experts:

Position	Member	Background / Significance
Chairman	**Justice Prakash Prabhakar Naolekar**	Retired Supreme Court Judge; ensures constitutional validity and legal oversight.
Member Secretary	**Joint Secretary (Foreigners-I), MHA**	Provides direct executive coordination with internal security apparatus.
Official Member	**The Census Commissioner of India**	Brings demographic data infrastructure and statistical accuracy.
Expert Member	**Durga Shankar Mishra**	Retired IAS Officer; provides insights on urban governance and infrastructure stress.
Expert Member	**Balaji Srivastava**	Retired IPS Officer; addresses border management and law enforcement.
Expert Member	**Shamika Ravi**	Renowned Economist; analyzes fiscal resource distribution and macroeconomic impacts.

- **Initial Mandated Tenure - *1 Year,*** the committee officially assumed its mandate following the gazette notification and is required to submit its report by May 2027.
- **Extension Provision-** The MHA has introduced a safety clause allowing for a maximum 6-month extension, strictly subject to the complexity of regional data reconciliation and field validation.
- **Maximum Lifecycle-** Under no ordinary circumstances will the committee's operational tenure extend beyond **18 months**, emphasizing the urgency of its national security directive.

India's Demographic Scenario

• The current demographic matrix reflects a stabilizing population with high working-age concentration:
• **Total Population - Current Status** - ~1.476 Billion.
• **Total Fertility Rate (TFR) - Current Status** - 1.9
• **Median Age - Current Status -** 29.2 Years.
• **Working-Age Share (Ages 15-64)- Current Status-** ~68%.
• **Urbanization Rate - Current Status-** ~37.6%.
• **Annual Population Growth Rate - Current Status -** 0.86%.

What are the Key Findings & Observations by MHA?

- The executive resolution highlights several structural deficiencies in the current socio-demographic architecture:
- **Divergence from Natural Lifecycle Trends-** Population alterations in specific pockets are not lineally linked to regular fertility or mortality curves.
- Instead, they are spurred by external, abnormal catalysts like planned migration and administrative laxity.
- **Geographical Spillover-** While visually acute in border districts, the systemic tremors of these demographic anomalies are now spilling over into:
    - Tier-1 and Tier-2 urban ecosystems.
    - Strategic industrial corridors.
    - Socio-environmentally sensitive tribal belts (Vth and VIth Schedule areas).
- **Institutional Framework Gaps -** The MHA noted that existing ad-hoc mechanisms lack a well-organized, centralized, and data-driven approach to execute coordinated evaluation, monitoring, and legal response frameworks.

What are the Terms of Reference (ToR) of the Committee?

- The MHA has structured the committee's mandate to address the root causes and suggest long-term statutory corrections:
- **Causal Investigation -** To analyse variations in local fertility, cross-border infiltration routes, economic pull-factors, and environmental disruptions driving abnormal settlement patterns.
- **Structural Community Audits -** To map structural deviations among specific social or religious groups that radically diverge from uniform regional demographic trends.
- **Institutional Overhaul for Deportation-** To conceptualize a permanent, fair, legal, and time-bound mechanism for the identification, localized detention, and repatriation of illegal foreign nationals.
- **Federal Synchronization -** To build a robust policy blueprint that harmonizes the operational security measures between Central law enforcement agencies and State police architectures.

What are the Specific administrative powers of the Committee?

- **Legislation Assessment Mandate** – Ministry of Home has tasked the committee to assess whether a brand-new, dedicated legislation is required to tackle "artificial" demographic changes, signalling potential future parliamentary bill.
- **Power of Sub - Committee** – Panel has power to independently request data, records & Secret documents from any Ministry, State Government & Individual or Public authority.

What are the challenges and concerns associated with it?

- **Geopolitical Strains-** Implementing large-scale deportation and detention architectures risks fracturing diplomatic relations with neighbours like Bangladesh and Myanmar, who officially deny systemic illegal outward migration.
- **Federal Friction -** Since public order and police are State subjects under the 7th Schedule, Central

directives that override local administrative control will likely trigger major political standoffs with opposition-led border states.
- **Humanitarian Violations-** Balancing aggressive internal security protocols with international customary laws, specifically the *principle of non-refoulement* (forbidding the return of individuals to regions where they face active persecution) will invite heavy judicial and human rights scrutiny.

What is the Significance of the Move?

- **Consolidates Sovereignty-** Establishes a data-backed territorial integrity framework to counter undocumented demographic changes that challenge traditional Westphalian borders.
- **Protects Socio-Cultural Fabric -** Neutralizes local identity anxieties in culturally sensitive belts (like the Northeast, West Bengal, and Bihar) by safeguarding indigenous rights within constitutional bounds.
- **Eases Fiscal and Infrastructure Stress -** Prevents the distortion of public goods delivery models (PDS, healthcare, housing) caused by sudden, unnatural population spikes that unbalance planned state resources.
- **Plugs Internal Security Vulnerabilities -** Secures fragile border pockets against exploitation by transnational syndicates involved in asymmetric warfare, radicalization, fake currency networks (FICN), and human trafficking.

What is the Way Forward?

- **Deploy Smart Border Grids -** Augment physical barriers with an integrated technology framework utilizing satellite tracking, thermal imaging, and LiDAR sensor to detect and intercept infiltration in real time.
- **Leverage Cooperative Federalism -** Institutionalize data collection by integrating state border intelligence, district magistrates, and Panchayats to ensure data accuracy and political non-partisanship.
- **Ensure Constitutional Compliance -** Ground all legal frameworks within the parameters of Article 21 (Right to Life and Liberty, which extends to non-citizens) to successfully withstand constitutional judicial review.
- **Digitize Civil Registration -** Accelerate the integration of a digital National Population Register (NPR) with real-time tracking via the Civil Registration System (CRS) to replace statistical estimations with hard empirical data.

Reference

Economic Times | High-level committee on demographic changes



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