Inner Line Permit & CAA

Why in news?

The Supreme Court declined the petition to stay the operation of a Presidential order pertaining to Inner Line Permit (ILP) in Assam.

What is Inner Line?

- A concept drawn by colonial rulers, the Inner Line separated the tribal-populated hill areas in the Northeast from the plains.
- To enter and stay for any period in these areas, Indian citizens from other areas need an Inner Line Permit (ILP).
- The Inner Line protects Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and Mizoram, and Manipur was added lately.

Where is the origin?

- The concept originates from the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation Act (BEFR), 1873.
- The policy of exclusion first came about as a response to the reckless expansion of British entrepreneurs into new lands, which threatened British political relations with the hill tribes.
- The BEFR prohibits the entry of an outsider (British subject or foreign citizen) into the area beyond the Inner Line without a pass and his purchase of land there.
- The Inner Line also protects the commercial interests of the British from the tribal communities.

What is the change made?

- After Independence, the Indian government replaced “British subjects” with “Citizen of India”.
- In 2013, the Home Ministry told that the main aim of ILP system is to prevent settlement of other Indian nationals in the States where ILP regime is prevalent.
- It said that settlement is prevented in order to protect the indigenous/tribal population.

How is it connected to the Citizenship Amendment Act?

- The CAA relaxes eligibility criteria for certain categories of migrants from three countries seeking Indian citizenship.
- But, it exempts certain categories of areas, including those protected by the Inner Line system.
- Amid protests against the Act, the Adaptation of Laws (Amendment) Order, 2019, issued by the President, amended the BEFR, 1873.
- This amendment extended the ILP to Manipur and parts of Nagaland that were not earlier protected by ILP.

What is the petition?

- Asom Jatiyatabadi Yuba Chatra Parishad (AJYCP) and All Tai Ahom Students' Union (ATASU) petitioned the Supreme Court against the Presidential order.
- They claimed that the order deprived Assam of the powers to implement the Inner Line system in its districts and limit the applicability of CAA.
- The original BEFR included the then Assam districts of Kamrup, Darrang, Nagaon, Sibsagar, Lakhimpur, and Cachar.
- Noting this, the petition said that the order took away the Assam government's permissive power to implement the ILP.
- This could have made the CAA inapplicable in these areas, the petition said.
- Groups such as the AJYCP have long been campaigning for long for implementation of the ILP in Assam.
- The CAA has given fresh legs to the demand.

What does the SC order imply?

- The petition had sought a stay on the Presidential order, which the Supreme Court did not grant.
- The court said it will have to hear what the other side (government) has to say on the matter.
- It will hear the matter again in two weeks.

Source: The Indian Express

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