Issues with One nation, One Card

Why in news?

Government has proposed the idea of a multipurpose identity card for citizens based on National Population Register project.

What is National Population Register project?

- The NPR is a list of "usual residents of the country", according to the Ministry of Home Affairs, a "usual resident of the country" is one who has been residing in a local area for at least the last six months, or intends to stay in a particular location for the next six months.
- Unlike the NRC, the NPR is not a citizenship enumeration drive, as it would record even a foreigner staying in a locality for more than six months.
- The NPR is being prepared under provisions of the Citizenship Act 1955 and the Citizenship (Registration of Citizens and issue of National Identity Cards) Rules, 2003.
- It is mandatory for every "usual resident of India" to register in the NPR.
- It will be conducted in conjunction with the house listing phase, the first phase of the Census, by the Office of the Registrar General of India (RGI) under the Home Ministry for Census 2021.
- Only Assam will not be included, given the recently completed NRC.
- The NPR exercise is conducted at the local, sub-district, district, state and national levels.
- The final enumeration will begin in April 2020 and end in September 2020.

How NPR data will be utilized?

- NPR would collect the Aadhaar number, the Permanent Account Number, the voter ID, and passport information, it will act like a multipurpose identity card for citizens.
- Sharing the Aadhaar number would be voluntary in view of the Supreme Court's judgment last year.
- All this data will not be in the public domain but accessible to a citizen through a password-protected protocol.

- On paper, the one nation, one card and NPR proposals, which may or may not be linked, have the logic of simplicity.
- It will relieve the Indian citizen of being loaded with multiple cards that act as identity documents most middle-class Indians have at least four.

What are the issues with existing and new ID cards?

- It is unclear why the government would feel the need to subject India's citizenry to another identification drive when over 90 per cent of them are covered by Aadhaar, which was an elaborate, time-consuming exercise.
- The census does not cover the entire population, which leaves unanswered the questions of the status of those citizens who are not visited by a census officer.
- There are suspicions that the registry would leave migrant labour, who may well be citizens but would not qualify as "usual residents".
- Apprehensions about data privacy, the Supreme Court's Aadhaar judgement a year ago had directed the government to introduce a "robust" data privacy law even as it upheld the constitutional validity of the exercise, This is nowhere in evidence, and remains a concern.
- The issue is, when there is a single card that holds all vital details, what happens when the system is compromised? There are also very few solutions in the event of data breaches, and the one card idea magnifies this danger.
- Aadhaar could be a natural choice for its reach and dynamism, 91 per cent of Indians (12.44 billion), out of total population of 13.69 billion (on Sep 23, 2019) now have an Aadhaar card.
- It has already been used to authenticate almost 34 billion transactions, amidst of the proposal for new card based on NPR seems to create more confusions.

Source: Business Standard

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