National Register of Citizens (NRC) data leaked in Assam Assembly

What is the issue?

- The Assam government tabled the National Register of Citizens (NRC) data in the Assembly, and demanded its re-verification.
- This controversy was capped when Supreme Court (SC) made a clear stance about the issue.

What is SC's stance?

- Last week, the SC refused to be drawn into a debate over the NRC data leakage.
- It stressed that it wants the final NRC out on schedule (August 31) irrespective of who likes it or who doesn't.

What kind of data was presented in the Assembly?

- According to the state government, these data are from the draft final NRC published in July, 2018.
- It showed the number of people included in and excluded from the NRC in each district of Assam.
- Last year, the NRC authorities didn't give a district-wise breakup and only released all-Assam totals.
- But, in the data tabled in the Assembly, the totals are slightly different.

What is the significance of data broken up district-wise?

- It is about **demographic** profiles and **geographic** locations.
- **Observed trend** - The inclusion rate is higher in Bangladesh-border districts, and lower in districts with a predominant indigenous population.
- The government cited these trends to claim the NRC is flawed. This presumes that the number of illegal immigrants will be higher in border districts.
- However, the migrants from East Bengal/East Pakistan/Bangladesh have been settling in various parts of Assam for decades.

What do demographic profiles tell us about immigration?

- It is widely accepted that the **migrant-origin population is predominantly Muslim.**
- The counter-argument is that Bengali Muslims have been entering Assam since British rule.
- Migration is considered illegal only when someone has entered Assam after March 24, 1971.
- **JNU Analysis of Census figures since 1891** – Muslims comprised 85% of migrants from East Bengal during 1891-1951, and about 2/3rd of migrants from East Pakistan during 1951-71.
- For the period of 1971-2011, the Muslim population growth in Assam (from about 25% to 34%) cannot be explained as a natural increase.
- The issues are far more complex than a simple sum game, much more than the demographics of religion.

Won't the NRC clear the uncertainty?

- NRC is caught up in so **many controversies over data**. The most vulnerable and the poorest are bound to suffer the most.
- **NRC was not scientific** as it was done without a pilot project.
- There are fundamental flaws in the field verification process.
- The total exclusion was lower than figures declared by the Centre from time to time.
- Whatever exclusion is happening, they too will be included in the final list as excluded people's close relatives are included.
- If the government cannot bring the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill (CAB) before the NRC, majority of the people will not find their names in NRC.

Why should exclusion cause the government anxiety?

- **Higher Muslim inclusion** will also imply that there is **higher Bengali Hindu exclusion**.
- One of the Assam leaders has appealed to the central committee that unless a Foreigners Tribunal or a higher court declares a person a foreigner, one should not be declared as such only based on the NRC.
- People who are eligible under CAB will be included as citizens once it's passed.

Source: The Indian Express



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