The Final NRC

What is the issue?

A Foreigners' Tribunal (FT) in Assam recently declared that the NRC Assam published in 2019 as the Final NRC.

What is National Register of Citizens (NRC)?

- The NRC in Assam is basically a list of **Indian citizens** living in the state.
- The Register is meant to establish the credentials of a bona fide citizen as distinguished from a foreigner.
- This is to detect Bangladeshi migrants who may have illegally entered Assam after the midnight of **March 24, 1971.**
- This cut-off date was originally agreed in the 1985 Assam Accord.
- NRC for Indian citizens in Assam was first created in 1951.
- The process to update the register began following a Supreme Court order in 2013.
- The updated NRC was released in 2019 with over 1.9 million applicants failing to make it to the list.

How does one prove citizenship?

- Names of applicant's family members should either be in the first NRC prepared in 1951 or in the electoral rolls up to March 24, 1971.
- Applicants can also present other documents such as refugee registration certificate, birth certificate, LIC policy, land and tenancy records, citizenship certificate, passport, government issued licence or certificate, bank/post office accounts, permanent residential certificate, educational certificate and court records.
- Non-inclusion of a person's name in the NRC will have the option to present their case before foreigners' tribunals and can move to high court and then the Supreme Court.
- The government has set up NRC Seva Kendras in every district of Assam to assist people.

What is the current issue regarding final NRC?

- Just before the publication of 2019 list, Assam and Centre had petitioned the Supreme Court for re-verification of a sample of names included in the draft NRC but this was dismissed as re-verification of 27% names had been already done.
- In 2021 another petition was filed in Supreme Court seeking re-verification of the 2019 list, citing inclusion, exclusion and other errors which is still pending.
- Recently, while hearing a Doubtful Voter case against Bikram Singha in Karimganj district Foreigners' Tribunal has said that the 2019 NRC is the final one.
- This raises concern as 2019 list has left around 19 lakh people whose citizenship would be determined at Foreign Tribunals.
- The opinion holds significance since the NRC has not yet been notified by Registrar General of India.
- Post-publication progress on the NRC is also slow.
- The issuance of rejection slips to those left out of the NRC has not begun.
- So, kick-starting the appeals process is perhaps the most prudent path ahead.

Source: The Hindu, The Indian Express

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