

U.S.'s 1776 Commission Report

Why in news?

The White House recently released the 1776 Commission report, just days before president-elect Joe Biden would take his oath in office.

Why was the commission set up?

- In September 2020, US President Donald Trump signed an executive order to set up a “national commission to promote patriotic education” in the country.
- The move was aimed at pleasing his conservative voter base in the run-up to the November 3 elections.
- The initiative, dubbed the ‘1776 Commission’, is an apparent counter to The 1619 Project.

What is The 1619 Project?

- The 1619 Project is a Pulitzer Prize-winning collection of essays on African American history of the past four centuries.
 - It explores the Black community’s contribution in nation-building since the era of slavery to modern times.
- The Project is a special initiative of The New York Times Magazine.
- It was launched in 2019 to mark the completion of 400 years since the first enslaved Africans arrived in colonial Virginia’s Jamestown in August 1619.
- The project was initiated by Nikole Hannah-Jones, a MacArthur Grant-winning journalist.
- The collection aims to reframe US history by considering what it would mean to regard 1619 as the nation’s birth year.

What is Trump’s intent in countering it?

- By attacking The 1619 Project, Trump hoped to win the support of conservatives.
- The conservatives oppose its central idea that US history should be reframed around the date of August 1619.
- They insist that the nation’s story should be told the way it has been over the years – beginning with the year 1776 or from 1788.
 - 1776 was when the Declaration of Independence was signed
 - 1788 was when the US Constitution was ratified

- Trump also threatened to withhold federal funding from public schools that used school syllabi based on the 1619 Project.
- He said The 1619 Project claimed that the US was “founded on the principle of oppression, not freedom”.
- He opines that the Left has warped, distorted, and defiled the American story.

What is the 1776 Commission?

- When he set it up, Trump was lagging behind president-elect Biden in polls for the presidential race.
- With this move Trump sought to activate his right-wing supporters by doubling down on what he described as “cancel culture”, “critical race theory” and “revisionist history”.
- Trump said then that students in their universities were inundated with critical race theory.
 - “This is a Marxist doctrine holding that America is a wicked and racist nation, that even young children are complicit in oppression, and that our entire society must be radically transformed.”
- Trump said a new “1776 Commission” would –
 - i. “encourage our educators to teach our children about the miracle of American history”
 - ii. “make plans to honour the 250th anniversary of our founding,”
 - iii. “teach the youth to “love America”
- Reportedly, the 18-member commission formed by Trump includes no professional historians.
- It however has a number of conservative activists, politicians and intellectuals.

What does the report say?

- The following is the declared purpose of the President’s Advisory 1776 Commission:
 - i. to enable a rising generation to understand the history and principles of the founding of the United States in 1776
 - ii. to strive to form a more perfect Union
- The report mentions that the above required a restoration of American education.
- This can only be grounded on a history of those principles that is “accurate, honest, unifying, inspiring, and ennobling.”
- A rediscovery of the shared identity rooted in the founding principles is said

to be the path to a renewed American unity and a confident American future.

Source: The Indian Express

