



Current Affairs of the Day

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- Centre likely to allow residents to fill their NPR details online.
- Right to dissent is central, says Sainath.

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- Environmentalists, residents against the legalisation of mining in Aravallis.



Centre likely to allow residents to fill their NPR details online

News: The Centre will allow residents to fill the National Population Register (NPR) form on their own, through the online mode, a month before the door-to-door enumeration by Census officials starts.

Highlights:

1. After filling the form online, residents will get a referral code that they can mention to the field enumerator at the time of her or his visit, according to a senior government official.
2. The details of the respondent will be displayed on a mobile application developed for conducting the Census exercise but no “biometrics or documents” will be collected. These details will then be stored in the system.
3. The first phase of the decennial Census exercise — the House-listing and Housing Census — along with updating the NPR was scheduled to be held from April 1, 2020.
4. According to the recently published report for the year 2019-20, there will be a three-pronged approach for updating the NPR database — self-updating, wherein it is proposed to allow residents to update their own data fields after following some authentication protocols on a web portal; updating of NPR data in the paper format; and the mobile mode.
5. The report said the government prepared the NPR of all the “usual residents” in the country in 2010 by collecting specific information of each resident. The NPR is prepared under various provisions of the Citizenship Rules, 2003, framed under the Citizenship Act, 1955.
6. In 2015, a few fields such as name, gender, date and place of birth, place of residence and father’s and mother’s name were updated and Aadhaar, mobile and ration card numbers were collected.

Additional queries

The questions for the fresh NPR have not been made public yet but the pre-test conducted in 2019 included additional questions, such as the date and the place of birth of the father and mother, the last place of residence and mother tongue, Aadhar (optional), Voter ID card, and mobile phone and Driver’s Licence numbers. States ruled by non-BJP parties have expressed apprehensions regarding the additional questions.



Widespread dissent

1. NPR's link with the proposed National Register of Citizens (NRC) and the yet to be implemented Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), 2019, has been opposed by many States and civil society groups.
2. The Citizenship Rules framed in the year 2003 say that the NPR is the first step towards the compilation of the National Register of Indian Citizens (NRIC), or the NRC.
3. The CAA passed by the Parliament on December 11, 2019, allows citizenship on the basis of religion to six undocumented communities from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh, who entered India on or before December 31, 2014.
4. Though the government has denied that the CAA and the NRC are linked, there are apprehensions that the CAA followed by a countrywide NRC, will benefit non-Muslims excluded from the proposed citizens' register, while excluded Muslims

The big count

A look at the next stage for updating the NPR database

■ The questions for the fresh NPR have not been made public yet but the pretest conducted in 2019 included questions such as date and place of birth of father and mother, last place of residence, mother tongue, Aadhaar (optional), voter ID card, apart from mobile phone and driver's licence numbers



■ No 'biometrics or documents' are to be collected by enumerators

■ A month before Census/NPR begins, residents will be given an option to enter details online, a reference code will be generated that will be provided to the enumerator. After entering the code on the mobile app, the details will be displayed and further updated in the database

will have to prove their citizenship.

5. However, in March 2020, the Ministry filed an affidavit in the Supreme Court that preparation of the NRC is a "necessary exercise for any sovereign country for mere identification of citizens from non-citizens".



6. It submitted that it is “the responsibility entrusted on the Central government “to identify/detect illegal migrants and thereafter, follow the due process of law”.

Right to dissent is central, says Sainath

News: Pointing out that the right to dissent should be the central focus of press freedom, independent journalist P. Sainath struck a dissenting note in the report submitted by the Index Monitoring Cell (IMC), set up by the Information and Broadcasting Ministry with stakeholders to improve India’s ranking in the World Press Freedom Index and to evolve an objective yardstick to gauge media freedom.

Highlights:

1. The right to dissent is very central. There are people filing FIRs and taking legal action against journalists (and other citizens) under the Epidemic Act, Disaster Act, sedition laws. We are shutting down the Internet for six months or more for whole regions.
2. The report failed in its objective to analyse the World Press Freedom Index (of Paris-based Reporters Without Borders or RSF), and India’s performance in it with a view to identifying areas of strengths and concern related to press freedom in India.
3. To draw attention to the stranglehold of several laws on press freedom, Mr Sainath pointed out 52-media related laws and their misuse by the State in intimidating journalists, adding that there was a complete lack of accountability of the state in the misuse of laws.
4. Among the key recommendations is the decriminalising of defamation. India is one of the few countries in the world to criminalise defamation.
5. The panel has also recommended that consent of the Press Council of India is a prerequisite before filing an FIR against the media or a publication.
6. The meeting of the panel comes in the backdrop of a steady decline in India’s ranking in press freedom.



Environmentalists, residents against the legalisation of mining in Aravallis

News: Ahead of the hearing of a petition by the Haryana government seeking permission for mining in Aravallis in Gurugram and Faridabad in the Supreme Court, environmentalists and the residents are strongly opposed to mining being legalised and demand that forest cover be increased in the State.

Highlights:

1. In an email campaign to the Chief Justice of India, the residents have been demanding that no mining and real estate be allowed in the Aravallis.
2. Instead, the government should come out with a three-year roadmap to take the legal native forest cover in the State to 20%, as per the Haryana Forest Department policy target and an all-India average.
3. The other demands include demolition of all illegal construction in the Aravalis, planting of native saplings, notifying 50,000 acres of the Aravalis as deemed forest and retaining the Aravalis in South Haryana as Natural Conservation Zone.

Pollution issue

1. The residents, in the email, argued that the destruction of the Aravalis would worsen the air pollution situation in the NCR and the mountain range is the only natural barrier against desertification.
2. The Aravalis, with their natural cracks and fissures, have the potential to put two million litres of water per hectare in the ground every year. Besides, the mountain range is a biodiversity hotspot with 400-odd species of native trees, shrubs and herbs; 200-odd native and migratory bird species; 100-odd butterfly species; 20-odd reptile species and 20-odd mammal species, including leopards, says the email.
3. As per the Economic Survey of Haryana 2020-21, as many as 58 mines out of the total 119 have been allocated. More than 26,000 cases of illegal mining, including 1,358 till September 2020 for the current financial year, have been reported.