



Detailed News Articles: 02 May 2019

May 2, 2019 Shiksha IAS Academy

1. [Religious freedom on the decline in India: U.S. panel](#)

The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF):

- The United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) is a bipartisan, independent federal government commission in the US.
- It was created by the International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA) of 1998.
- USCIRF's principal responsibilities are to review the facts and circumstances of violations of religious freedom internationally and to make policy recommendations to the President, the Secretary of State, and the Congress.
- The Commission on International Religious Freedom issues an annual report that includes policy recommendations to the U.S. government based on the report's evaluation of the facts and circumstances of religious freedom violations worldwide.

Country Particular Concern (CPC):

- Tier 2 countries are those in which "violations engaged in or tolerated by the government during 2018 are serious and characterized by at least one of the elements of the 'systematic, ongoing, and egregious' CPC (Country of Particular Concern) standard.
- CPCs are designated by the State Department and the.

Details:

- USCIRF has placed India on CPC and watch list in 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2009 and 2010.
- In its 2019 report released earlier this week, India continues to remain a Tier 2 country, a list it has been unable to get off of since 2009.
- Latest list, from November 2018, contains 10 countries including Burma, China, Pakistan, Iran and Saudi Arabia in the CPC list. In these countries the government has tolerated or engaged in "particularly severe religious freedom violations, meaning those are systematic, ongoing, and egregious."
- Other Tier 2 countries for 2018 are Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Cuba, Egypt, Indonesia, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Laos, Malaysia and Turkey.
- It says "In countries like India, it is increasingly difficult to separate religion and politics, a tactic that is sometimes intentional by those who seek to discriminate against and restrict the rights of certain religious communities."
- The report says conditions for minorities in India have deteriorated over the last decade, adding that a "multifaceted campaign by Hindu nationalist groups like the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), Sangh Parivar, and Vishva Hindu



Parishad (VHP) to alienate non-Hindus or lower-caste Hindus is a significant contributor to the rise of religious violence and persecution.”

- It calls out the role of Hindutva/Hindu extremist groups, India’s anti-conversion laws, cow-protection lynch mobs, concerns that millions from Assam will be incorrectly left out of the National Register of Citizens and a lack of transparency on denying international NGOs registration and political targeting of NGOs.
- The Commission found that despite the overall deteriorating conditions there were “positive developments”.
- In this context, it took note of Home Minister’s observation from last December that communal attacks dropped by 12 % in 2018 from their 2017 levels, an 12% increase in the budget of the Ministry of Minority Affairs and the Supreme Court’s push for a 11-point plan to counter mob violence.

Chairman records dissenting view:

- Tenzin Dorjee, Commission Chairperson dissented with the view that India’s religious freedoms continued to decline in 2018.
- “India is an open society with a robust democratic and judiciary system,” he writes in the report.
- “As I commented last year, overall, I believe religious harmony exists in India [sic],” Mr Dorjee says, describing his experience of having lived as a Tibetan refugee in India for over 30 years, where he mostly witnessed the best of India and sometimes worst due to intractable religious conflicts.
- A new Commission member, Anurima Bhargava, a Chicago-native of Indian origin, wrote that the Commission had not had the opportunity to officially visit India in over a decade and sought stronger engagement and a productive dialogue with India.

2. UN Security Council designates Masood Azhar as global terrorist

Chronology of events:

2009: India moves a proposal by itself to designate Azhar as a global terrorist, a listing that will subject him to global travel ban, asset freeze and arms embargo. China blocks the move.

2016: India again moves the proposal with the backing of the P3 – the United States, the United Kingdom and France in the UN’s 1267 Sanctions Committee to ban Azhar.

2017: The P3 nations move a similar proposal again. China, a veto-wielding permanent member of the Security Council, blocks the proposal from being adopted.



February 27, 2019: The US, the UK and France move a fresh proposal in the UN Security Council to designate Azhar as a global terrorist.

March 13, 2019: China puts the hold on the proposal scuttling yet another attempt to blacklist the JeM chief. The proposal was the fourth such bid at the UN in the last 10 years to list Azhar as a global terrorist.

March 28, 2019: The US, supported by France and the UK, directly moves a draft resolution in the UN Security Council to blacklist the Pakistan-based terror group's chief.

April 3, 2019: China hits out at the US for threatening to use all available resources to designate the JeM chief as a 'global terrorist', saying Washington's move is complicating the issue and not conducive to peace and stability in South Asia.

April 30, 2019: China says "some progress" has been achieved on designating Azhar as a global terrorist by the UN and hopes that the vexed issue will be properly resolved.

May 1, 2019: The 1267 Sanctions Committee designates Azhar as a global terrorist after China lifts the hold on the proposal of the US, the UK and France.

Details:

- At the end of March, the U.S. circulated a draft resolution (to sanction Azhar) among the UNSC members, i.e., outside the 1267 Committee, presumably to pressure China into either supporting the listing or having to take a stand in open proceedings and risk being seen as supporting terror.
- However, the US moved a draft resolution to the UNSC, which would have forced a vote on the issue and then the only way China could have blocked the process was by a veto.
- Earlier this week, China had said "some progress" had been made and indicated it was willing to change its decade-long position.
- The decision by China to lift its technical hold was achieved after intense negotiations across global capitals.
- Designation as a terrorist would mean a travel ban, arms embargo and asset freeze on Azhar.
- Indonesia as chair of the 1267 designation committee played a key role.

Reasons for listing:

The reasons for designating Azhar as a terrorist as per the listing includes



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- His support for the JeM since its founding
- Being associated with the al-Qaeda by recruiting for them and “participating in the financing, planning, facilitating, preparing, or perpetrating of acts or activities or supplying, selling or transferring arms and related material”.
- It also pointed to his role in recruiting fighters in Afghanistan.
- The JeM itself was sanctioned by the 1267 Committee in 2001.
- However, the reasons for listing did not mention the Pulwama attack of February 14, for which the JeM had claimed responsibility, and which found mention in the latest (February 27) listing request for Azhar.

What is its significance to India?

- It is a significant outcome for India because India has been at it for several years.
- The first effort that India made in this regard was in 2009.
- More recently, India has been persistent, diligent and in a subterranean manner, making all the efforts towards this goal. Now that goal stands achieved.

While the US was backed by the UK and France in its endeavour, India engaged separately with China to strengthen its case during its foreign secretary’s visit to Beijing last month. Russia, the other P-5 member, played a quiet role by urging China to accede to India’s request in the backdrop of Pulwama terror attack to earn India’s goodwill.



The terror list prepared by the 1267 Sanctions Committee of the United Nations, includes **262 individuals** and **83 entities**.

Individuals listed apart from Masood Azhar:

▪ **Ayman Al-Zawahari:**
al-Qaeda leader

▪ **Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi:**
Islamic State leader

▪ **Aamir Ali Chaudary:**
Tehreek-e-Taliban
Pakistan (TTP)
explosives expert

▪ **Maulana Fazlullah:**
TTP leader
(*died last year*)

▪ **Abdul Rehman
al-Sindhi:**
al-Qaeda operative

▪ **Sidi Mohamed Arhali:**
linked to al-Qaeda

▪ **Ibrahim Hassan Tali Asiri:**
Chief bomb-maker for al-Qaeda

▪ **Othman al-Ghamdi:**
Commander of al-Qaeda

▪ **Ghalib Abdallah al-Zuhayri:**
Leader of al-Qaeda

▪ **Ali Musa al-Shawaq:**
Islamic State leader

▪ **Hamza bin Laden:**
Son of Osama
bin Laden



3. [Iraq remains top oil supplier to India](#)

- Saudi Arabia has traditionally been India's top oil source, but it was for the first time dethroned by Iraq in 2017-18 fiscal year.
- While India stopped importing crude oil from Iran following reimposition of economic sanctions this month by the U.S., the Persian Gulf nation was the third largest crude oil supplier to India.
- Iran was India's second biggest supplier of crude oil after Saudi Arabia till 2010-11, but western sanctions over its suspected nuclear programme relegated it to the seventh spot in subsequent years.
- UAE topped Venezuela to become India's fourth-largest crude supplier.



- Nigeria, Kuwait and Mexico are other major suppliers.
- The U.S., which began selling crude oil to India in 2017, is fast becoming a major source.

4. [Chandrayaan-2 gets new launch window](#)

Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) said that India set to launch second mission to the moon Chandrayan-2 in July.

Details:

- India's much-delayed second lunar mission, Chandrayaan-2, is now set to be launched any time between July 5 and July 16 this year.
- The moon landing is likely to be in September nearly two months after the launch, close to the lunar South Pole, ISRO said.
- The lunar South Pole is believed to contain ice and other minerals, and international space expedition plans are hotting up with NASA planning to land astronauts there by 2024, while China reportedly plans to build a scientific research station on the lunar South Pole within the next decade.

Chandrayaan-2:

- Chandrayaan-2 is a fully-indigenous mission that comprises three modules
 1. An Orbiter,
 2. A Lander named 'Vikram'
 3. A Rover named 'Pragyan'
- It will be launched on board a GSLV-MkIII rocket.
- The GSLV-MkIII is a three-stage heavy lift launch vehicle that has been designed to carry four-tonne class satellites into Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO).
- The Chandrayaan-1 mission was launched on board a PSLV.
- The Chandrayaan-2 weighs around 3,290 kg.
- It would orbit around the moon and carry out remote sensing of the moon.
- The payloads will collect scientific information on lunar topography, mineralogy, elemental abundance, lunar exosphere and signatures of hydroxyl and water-ice.
- The Orbiter and the Lander will be stacked together as an integrated module, while the Rover will be housed inside the Lander.
- According to ISRO, once the Orbiter reaches the 100 km lunar orbit, the Lander will separate from it and ISRO will carry out a controlled descent at a specific site and deploy the Rover.
- The six-wheeled Rover will "move around the landing site in semi-autonomous mode as decided by the ground commands.
- The instruments on the rover will observe the lunar surface and send back data, which will be useful for analysis of the lunar soil.

5. [Power shift: on tussle between Puducherry Lt. Governor and Chief Minister](#)



- It is important to note that the Lieutenant Governor of Puducherry, Kiran Bedi has been locked in a prolonged dispute over the extent of her powers with Chief Minister V. Narayanasamy, who says she has been disregarding the elected regime and seeking to run the Union Territory on her own.

What did the court rule?

- The court has laid down that “the decision taken by the Council of Ministers and the Chief Minister is binding on the Secretaries and other officials.”
- As a matter of fact, inspired by the Supreme Court’s appeal to constitutional morality and trust among high dignitaries, the High Court has also reminded the Centre and the Administrator that they should be true to the concept of democratic principles, lest the constitutional scheme based on democracy and republicanism be defeated.

What was the judgement based on?

- The judgement is based mainly on the principles that were laid down in last year’s (2018) Constitution Bench decision on the conflict between the elected regime in the National Capital Territory (NCT) and its Lt.Governor.
- The five-judge Bench had ruled that the L-G has to either act on the ‘aid and advice’ of the Council of Ministers, or refer to the President for a decision any matter on which there is a difference with the Ministry, but has no independent decision-making powers.
- The High Court also says the Administrator is bound by the ‘aid and advice’ clause in matters over which the Assembly is competent to enact laws.
- The L-G’s power to refer any matter to the President to resolve differences should not mean “every matter”, the court has cautioned.

The difference in status between Delhi and Puducherry:

- Justice R. Mahadevan, who delivered the Madras High Court judgment, is conscious of the difference in status between Delhi and Puducherry.
- It is important to note that the Puducherry legislature is the creation of a parliamentary law, based on an enabling provision in Article 239A of the Constitution, whereas the NCT legislature has been created by the Constitution itself under Article 239AA.
- The Supreme Court had described the NCT as sui generis.
- At the same time, the NCT Assembly is limited in the extent of its legislative powers, as it is barred from dealing with the subjects of public order, police and land.
- However, looking at the Business Rules as well as other statutory provisions on Puducherry, the judge has sought to give greater credence to the concept of a representative government.
- The judge has set aside two clarifications issued by the Centre in 2017 to the effect that the L-G enjoys more power than the Governor of a State and can act without aid and advice. In view of the Constitution Bench judgment on Delhi,



he has differed with another Madras High Court decision of 2018 in which the LG's power to act irrespective of the Cabinet's advice was upheld.

Concluding Remarks:

- In the event that the latest judgment is taken up on appeal, a key question may be how far the decision of the five-judge Bench on the limits of the Delhi L-G's powers would indeed apply to Puducherry.
6. [The smokescreen of an infiltrator-free India](#)

Some Noteworthy points:

- Assam is the only State in the country that had prepared an NRC in 1951.
- It also became the first State to get the first draft of its own updated NRC.
- The Register is meant to establish the credentials of a bona fide citizen as distinguished from a foreigner.
- This was done to detect Bangladeshi migrants who may have illegally entered Assam after the midnight of March 24, 1971.
- This cut-off date was originally agreed to in the 1985 Assam Accord.

What is the Assam Accord?

- Assam witnessed a range of law and order problems and political turbulence driven by the anti-foreigners movement, in the early 1980s.
- Responding to this development, the Assam Accord (1985) was signed by the Centre and the All Assam Students' Union (AASU).
- Consequent to this, those foreigners who had entered Assam between 1951 and 1961 were to be given full citizenship, including the right to vote.
- The entrants between 1961 and 1971 were to be denied voting rights for ten years but would enjoy all other rights of citizenship.
- Anyone who entered the state without documents after March 24, 1971 will be declared a foreigner and were to be deported.
- Having said this, the Accord also had a package for the economic development of Assam.
- It also had assurance to provide safeguards to protect the cultural, social, and linguistic identity and heritage of the Assamese people.

What happened thereafter?

- Experts opine that the successive governments in the State failed to effectively detect and deport foreigners as set out in the Assam Accord.
- In 2005, another agreement was signed between the Centre, the Assam government and the AASU.
- Accordingly, it was decided to update the NRC that was first published after the Census data of 1951.
- The NRC update though started as a pilot project in some districts was stopped after violence broke out in some parts of the State.



- As a matter of fact, in 2009, Assam Public Works (APW), an NGO filed a petition in the Supreme Court. It called for **identification of Bangladeshi foreigners in the State and deletion of their names from the voters' list.**

A Look at the challenges that lie ahead:

1. Challenge Associated with Claims:

A security challenge could possibly emerge when the process of updating the NRC gets completed.

2. Post marriage migration:

Nearly 29 lakh women, who have migrated after marriage, have claimed for residency status.

Their claim is supported by certificates issued by gram panchayat secretaries and executive magistrates. Further, the Supreme Court has clarified that while these documents could be allowed, it could by no means be taken as proof of citizenship.

- ##### **3. Verifying Authenticity:**
- The challenge lies in verifying the authenticity of the certificates for establishing the link between the claimant and the legacy person (who has to be a citizen).

A Look at Clause 6 of the Assam Accord?

- The Assam Accord came at the culmination of a movement against immigration from Bangladesh.
- For recognition as citizens, the Accord sets March 24, 1971 as the cutoff date.
- It was proposed that the immigrants up to the cutoff date would get all rights as Indian citizens.
- Thus, Clause 6 was inserted to protect, preserve and promote the cultural, social, linguistic identity and heritage of the “Assamese people”.
- It seeks to offer constitutional, legislative and administrative safeguards to the Assamese people.
- “Assamese people” – As agreed by most stakeholders, the NRC of 1951 was the basis for defining “Assamese people”.
- The current NRC update is based on March 24, 1971, which defines citizenship.
- On the other hand, Clause 6 relates to “Assamese people”.
- It is important to note that if 1951 is accepted as the cutoff, it would imply that those who migrated between 1951 and 1971 would be Indian citizens.
- However, they would not be eligible for safeguards meant for “Assamese people”.

Perspective on Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016:

- Citizenship Bill – The Centre is pushing for the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2016.



- It seeks to grant citizenship to Hindu Bangladeshis who have entered Assam illegally post-1971.
- Various groups have opposed identification of illegal migrants on the basis of religion.
- This unresolved citizenship related issue could further pose a challenge for the positive outcome of the NRC, even if completed.

Editorial Analysis:

- Critics allege that the current administration's poll promise to implement the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in a phased manner in other parts of the country is only a smokescreen to hide its real agenda of using the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill to segregate non-citizens on the basis of religion and subjecting only the Muslims among them to anti-immigration laws of the country.
- At present, Assam is the only State in the country to have an NRC, which was compiled way back in 1951.
- The process of updating the 1951 NRC in Assam has been on since 2015 under constant monitoring by the Supreme Court.
- The complete draft of the updated NRC in Assam published on July 30, 2018 excluded the names of over 40 lakh of the total 3.29 crore applicants.
- The Supreme Court has fixed July 31, 2019 for publication of the final NRC list after disposal of all claims and objections.

The problem of the cut-off date:

- However, critics allege that the NRC smokescreen has thickened as the current administration has not spelt out in its manifesto the cut-off date for the proposed NRC for the entire country.
- An important question arises: If the cut-off date is going to be different from that taken for updating the NRC in Assam, what will be the legal status of those included in the updated register in Assam in the rest of the country, and vice versa?
- The cut-off date for updating the NRC in Assam is March 24, 1971, which is also the cut-off date in the Assam Accord for implementation of the core clause, Clause 5, which calls for identification, deletion of names and expulsion of "illegal migrants" from Bangladesh, irrespective of their religion.
- The Accord facilitated acceptance of undocumented migrants from erstwhile East Pakistan who came until this cut-off date as Indian citizens, except in respect of the stream of people who came in 1966-71 and who are to remain disenfranchised for a period of 10 years from the date of their registration as foreigners.
- It is important to note that updating the NRC in Assam on the basis of this core clause led to a broad political consensus in the State that the updated register



will be a critical document for implementing this clause and addressing the apprehension of the Assamese and other ethnic communities in the State of losing their linguistic, cultural and ethnic identities due to unabated migration from Bangladesh.

View of the Current Administration at the Centre:

- The current administration has been pushing the campaign in Assam that 1951 should have been the cut-off date in the Assam Accord for identification of “infiltrators” from erstwhile East Pakistan and present-day Bangladesh.
- Though it has not taken any official position on reviewing the Assam Accord for fear of antagonising the Assamese, critics allege that it has been pushing the campaign in a desperate bid to make them accept religion as the basis in place of language, culture and ethnicity for construction of an Assamese identity.
- The Assam government recently informed the Supreme Court that it has submitted a ₹900 crore proposal to the Ministry of Home Affairs for sanctioning 1,000 Foreigners Tribunals to decide the cases of those to be excluded from the final NRC list.
- The State has a hundred Foreigners Tribunals at present.

A legal shield? What the Critics Say?

- Critics allege that the current administration at the Centre needs the Bill to be first enacted as a legal shield for the large number of Bengali Hindus in Assam, in other north-eastern States, and in West Bengal, who migrated from erstwhile East Bengal and after the creation of Bangladesh.
- They further point out that the current administration pushed the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019, notwithstanding widespread protests in the north-eastern States and got it passed in the Lok Sabha. But it did not push it in the Rajya Sabha for lack of numbers.
- It is important to note that the Ministry of Home Affairs on October 18, 2018 notified the Citizenship (Amendment) Rules, 2018 **making it mandatory for a person applying for Indian citizenship to declare her or his religion.**

Concluding Remarks: A cautionary note:

- It is important to note that the smokescreen of an infiltrator-free India without explicitly defining an infiltrator will not be able to hide the real threat posed to the country’s secular fabric.
- Further, some experts believe that if the Bill is made into an Act, it poses the threat of abusing the NRC to divide people on religious lines.
- The country can ill afford such a divisive agenda.

7. [Beyond Khalistan \(Indo-Canadian Ties\)](#)

A Look at the Immediate Past:

- Members of Mr. Trudeau’s Cabinet, especially Defence Minister Harjit Singh Sajjan, have been accused of having links with Sikh separatists.



- When Mr. Sajjan visited India in April 2017, Punjab Chief Minister Captain Amarinder Singh refused to meet him for this reason.
- Similarly, Mr. Trudeau received the cold shoulder during his India visit in February 2018.
- When Mr. Singh met Mr. Trudeau, their discussion was on the Khalistan issue, rather than on areas of mutual cooperation.
- Recently, Mr. Trudeau drew the ire of the Indian government when a report on terror threats avoided the words 'Khalistani extremism'.

The Way Forward:

- There is no doubt that some overseas Sikhs support a separate Sikh homeland, and that there is not much appetite for the same in Punjab.
- However, it is important to not link criticism of India on human rights issues, such as the Sikh pogrom of 1984 and extrajudicial killings in the 1980s and 1990s, with Sikh separatism.
- The Indian media, the government and even politicians in Punjab need to realise that Sikhs based in Canada, the U.K. and the U.S. may have different political views. Similarly, non-violent support for a cause cannot be labelled as a militant activity.
- If there is evidence of support for any violent activity, New Delhi and Canada must work together to tackle the problem.
- Experts opine that by focusing only on the Khalistan issue, New Delhi risks alienating the Sikh diaspora. India should instead reach out to the Sikh diaspora in a year when Sikhs and all other followers of Guru Nanak will be commemorating his 550th birth anniversary.
- Critics of the Canadian government must also bear in mind that like all relationships, this is a multi-layered one. While New Delhi may be uncomfortable with the Canadian government's approach towards the activities of certain Sikh hard-liners, it is important to bear in mind that for the year 2017, **Indian students received well over 25% (over 80,000) of the available study permits.**
- Further, in 2017, well over 40% of the 86,022 people who received invitations for permanent residency were Indians. During 2018, this rose by a staggering 13% to 41,000.
- It is important to handle ties with Canada with nuance.
- First, members of the Sikh diaspora and Sikh politicians who are vocal on human rights issues shouldn't be labelled Khalistani sympathisers. Second, it should be remembered that the New Delhi-Ottawa relationship goes well beyond the Khalistan issue.

Q1. Consider the following statements:

1. Bardoli Satyagraha was led by Gandhi.
2. It was in Bardoli satyagraha where Vallabhbhai patel got title "Sardar".



Which of the following statement/s is/are correct?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

Q2. Cyberdome, recently seen in news is

- a. A hi-tech centre for cyber security that has been set up in Kerala
- b. The nodal agency to deal with cyber security threats like hacking and phishing
- c. A recently conceptualised AI-enabled solution to deal with cyber crimes
- d. A civil society organization and a think tank of cyber security experts

Q3. Consider the following statements:

- 1. Fundamental Duties were added on the recommendation of Swaran Singh Committee
- 2. Fundamental Duties were added by the Forty-second Amendment of the Constitution

Which of the following statement/s is/are correct?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2