



C.A Dated On 06-07-2019

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National Register of Citizens (NRC)

Why in News?

UN experts on Wednesday warned that the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam could render millions of citizens stateless and create instability in India. A panel of three experts said the exercise has increased hate speech against minorities in social media and built a climate of racial hatred.

About NRC:

- The **National Register of Citizens (NRC)** a register containing names of all genuine [Indian](#) citizens. The register was first prepared after the 1951 Census of India. [Census of India](#).
- The NRC is now being updated in Assam to include the names of those persons (or their descendants) who appear in the NRC, 1951, or in any of the [Electoral](#) Rolls up to the midnight of 24th March, 1971 or in any one of the other admissible documents issued up to mid-night of 24th March, 1971, which would prove their presence in Assam or in any part of India on or before 24th March, 1971.

Background:

- The update process of NRC started in the year 2013, when the Supreme Court of India passed orders for its update.
- Since then, the Supreme Court (bench of Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi and Rohinton Fali Nariman) have been monitoring it continuously.
- The entire project is headed by the State Coordinator of National Registration, Assam, Mr Prateek Hajela under the strict monitoring of Supreme Court of India.

Purpose of NRC

- The purpose of NRC update is to identify Indian citizens from amongst all the residents of Assam thereby leading to identification of illegal migrants residing in Assam, who entered Indian territories after the midnight of 24th March 1971 and to determine the citizenship of the applicants who have applied for inclusion of their names in the updated NRC.



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Childrens and Substance Use:

Why in News?

Nearly 26 lakh children in the country are addicted to "sedatives and inhalants," Social Justice and Empowerment Minister Thawar Chand Gehlot informed the Rajya Sabha on Thursday.

Details:

- Alcohol was the most common psychoactive substance used by Indians followed by cannabis and opioids.
- Over 16 crore people in the country consume alcohol, around 3.1 crore use Cannabis and about 77 lakh people take opioids.
- "More than 5.7 crore alcohol users, 72 lakh cannabis users and about 77 lakh opioid users are addicted and need help.

National survey

- The findings were part of a national household survey conducted by the Ministry in 2018.
- The survey also indicates that around 1.18 crore people between the age group of 10 and 75 are taking sedatives and 77 lakh are using inhalents.
- Children and adolescents were found to be using inhalents more than others.
- During the survey, over two lakh households were visited in 186 districts of the country and a total of 4,73,569 individuals were interviewed, he added.
- The government was also conducting a survey in 10 cities across the country to assess the pattern and profile of substance use among school and college students. The report was expected by November this year.

The Baloch Liberation Army :



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Why in News?

The U.S. on July 2 designated the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA) as a terror organisation. "The BLA is an armed separatist group that targets security forces and civilians, mainly in ethnic Baloch areas of [Pakistan](#)," said the U.S. State Department in a statement.

History:

- In the seven decades of the Baloch movement, the BLA has survived the longest.
- It is borne out of the tradition of armed militants who were earlier indirectly supported by the Marri, Bugti, Mengal and other clans or sardars.
- The Baloch movement was influenced by the Soviet Union and radical Marxist ideology in the past and some of their leaders were trained by Moscow.
- The BLA continues to draw from the same revolutionary spirit but has added that to the younger generation of fighters.

Who are their leaders?

- While it is well-known that several overground Baloch leaders are sympathetic to the organisation, the overground tribal leaders do not flaunt ties with the organisation as it has been banned by Pakistan since 2006. The BLA has maintained a fluid leadership pattern.

What's its ideology?

- BLA rebels claim that Pakistan has been exploiting the resources of the Province without giving the due share to the locals and the indigenous Baloch tribes.
- In recent years, the BLA has emerged as a movement with a network of supporters in both urban and rural areas of Balochistan, and has created a space for itself away from the traditional hold of the sardars of tribes.
- BLA rebels have claimed that they are aiming for both freedom from Pakistan and internal reform of the Baloch society.
- They are opposed to the traditional sardar or Kawailey system at home.
- As a result of its non-traditional approach, BLA has become more popular among young and educated Balochis.



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What are India's ties with Baloch rebels?

- It is established that BLA commanders, in the past, had sought medical treatment in India's hospitals, often under disguise or with fake identity.
- In one such case, a militant commander in charge of Khuzdar city was based in Delhi for at least six months in 2017 when he underwent extensive treatment for kidney-related ailments.
- Pakistan has blamed India for supporting the Baloch rebels.
- It is known that the Baloch sardars like the late Akbar Bugti and Ghaus Bukhsh Bizenjo maintained warm personal ties with various Indian political figures. However, visits by militants are often under assumed identities unlike those by prominent well known leaders.

What does the U.S. ban mean?

- Pakistan is expected to make it difficult for commanders and module chiefs of the BLA to travel in the region.
- The fighters are also likely to find fund-raising more difficult.
- In a communication to *The Hindu*, Baloch rebels, however, have indicated that they are planning to intensify the struggle against Pakistan as they remain "the most popular" militant organisation in Balochistan despite Pakistan military's crackdown.

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Highlights of the Union Budget:

1. PAN and Aadhaar will become interchangeable. You can use your Aadhaar number to file your I-T Returns soon.
2. ₹5 lakh minimum limit announced for taxpayers. In view of rising income levels, those in the ₹2-5 crore and ₹5 crore-and-above brackets will see increase in effective tax rate by 3% and 7%, respectively.
3. GST rate on electric vehicles proposed to be lowered to 5%. Additional income tax deduction of ₹1.5 lakh on interest on loans taken to purchase electric vehicles.
4. Additional deduction of ₹1.5 lakh on loans up to March 31 2020 for buying affordable houses, giving ₹ 7 lakh benefit to home buyers.



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5. Proposal to provide Aadhaar cards for NRIs with Indian passports, after their arrival in India, with no waiting period.
6. ₹20 coin coming up.
7. Excise duty on fuel hiked by ₹1.
8. To resolve the angel tax issue, startups will not be subject to any scrutiny in respect to valuation. Funds raised by startups will not require any scrutiny by the I-T department.
9. TDS of 2% on cash withdrawals exceeding ₹1 crore in a year from bank accounts, to discourage business payments in cash.
10. Period of exemption for capital gains arising from sale of house for investment in startups to be extended to March 31, 2021.
11. ₹70,000 crore in recapitalisation for public sector banks.
12. ₹1.05 lakh crore disinvestment target for the year.
13. TV channel to be launched for promoting startups and to help matchmaking for funds.
14. New national educational policy hopes to transform Indian education into one of the best in the world, with focus on bringing in foreign students.
15. ₹50 lakh crores proposed for Railway infrastructure.
16. By 2022, the 75th year of Independence, every single rural family, except those who are unwilling to take the connection, will have electricity and clean cooking facility.
17. Stress on zero-budget farming, which is a form of gardening as a self-sustainable practice, with minimum external intervention.
18. The pension benefit will be extended to 3 crore retail traders under PM Karam Yogi Maan Dhan Scheme. It requires only Aadhaar numbers and bank accounts.
19. ₹1 crore worth of loans proposed to MSMEs.
20. Investment by FIIs and FDIs in debt securities in infrastructure debt funds to be allowed. Minimum public shareholding in listed companies can be increased from 25% to 35%.
21. Global Investors Meet to happen in India.

Arctic Research:

Context:



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In a couple of months, the German icebreaker RV Polarstern, a hulking ship will set out for the Arctic packed with supplies and scientific equipment for a year-long mission to explore the planet's frigid far north.

About the Mission:

- The icebreaker will be the base for scientists from 17 nations studying the impact of [climate change](#) on the Arctic and how it could affect the rest of the world.
- The mission's aim to understand global warming means there's no time for national rivalry, said Rex.
- By combining measurements on the ice with data collected from satellites, scientists hope to improve the increasingly sophisticated computer models for weather and climate predictions. "

Financing of the Mission:

The mission has received funding from U.S. institutions such as the National Science Foundation, the Department of Energy, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, and NASA.

Background:

- The MOSAiC mission, which stands for Multidisciplinary drifting Observatory for the Study of Arctic Climate, comes about 125 years after Norwegian explorer Fridtjof Nansen first managed to seal his wooden expedition ship, Fram, into the ice during a three-year expedition to the North Pole.
- Scientists now believe that the cold cap that forms each year is key to regulating weather patterns across the Northern Hemisphere.
- Mr. Rex cited the polar vortices that blasted cold air as far as Florida last winter and the early summer heat wave in Europe as prime examples of the impact.
- "The dramatic warming of the Arctic doesn't stay in the Arctic.

Salt Adulteration:

Why in News?



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Citing a report from U.S.-based West American Analytical Laboratories, Shiv Shankar Gupta, chairman of Godhum Grains and Food Products, accused some salt manufacturers in India of selling food-grade salt that contained high levels of potassium ferrocyanide. This caused a panic, which was aggravated by widespread sharing of the news item on social media.

Indeed, potassium ferrocyanide is being used in salt to give it anti-caking properties. But the answer to whether it is toxic is no!

Is it really dangerous?

- Firstly, while potassium cyanide is a toxic substance and releases the cyanide anion when consumed by a person, potassium ferrocyanide is not.
- In potassium ferrocyanide, the cyanide anion is strongly bonded to ferrous ion and hence does not get hydrolysed.
- Secondly, there is the factor known as the LD50 value. This is expanded as "Lethal Dose 50%".
- LD50 is the amount of any chemical that can cause death in 50% of the group of animals that it enters by consumption or absorption through the skin.
- According to inorganic chemist Dr. Sayam Sengupta of IISER Kolkata, the LD50 value for common salt — sodium chloride — for rats is greater than 3 gram per kilogram body weight of the animal. He points out that for potassium Ferrocyanide, LD 50 value is 3.6 gram per kilogram weight of the animal, when taken orally.
- As this indicates, the LD50 value of potassium ferrocyanide is almost the same as common salt.
- Thirdly, the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) has prescribed the levels of potassium ferrocyanide that can be used in salt.
- The allowed levels of potassium ferrocyanide in salt is 10 mg/kg. whereas the level in the Tata salt was found to be 1.90 mg/kg and that of Sambhar salt was found to be about 4.71 mg/kg, both within allowed levels.

Some countries such as the European Union have banned the use of potassium ferrocyanide as anti-caking agent. However, the analysis indicates that there is no reason to fear toxicity due to this chemical being used.