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Protests in Mizoram over Citizenship Bill

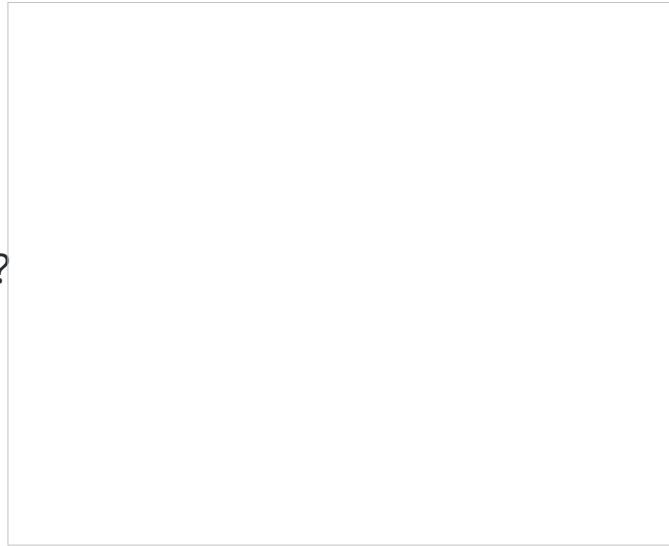
Apart from other Northeastern states recently **Mizoram has witnessed massive demonstrations** over the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill 2016.

This protest was organised by the influential **Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP)** which is a **Mizo multinational student organization** and apex students body in Mizoram state.

Reasons for Protest

- In Mizoram, the **concern is not about Hindu immigrants from Bangladesh** like in Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura but about **Chakmas, a tribal and largely Buddhist group**.
- The Chakmas are present in parts of the Northeast, and the **Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh**, with which .
- The state has seen **ethnic violence**, with instances of arson, names of Chakmas being struck off voters' lists, and denial of admission to Chakma students in college.
- MZP which is leading the current agitation, have often cited figures they attribute to the Census. In 1901, there were only 198 Chakmas in Mizoram and by 1991 it was over 80,000.
- **According to MZP the growth rate is far more than normally possible** which proves that there has been **influx from Bangladesh**.
- At the same time Chakma activists cite a **2015 report** submitted by the government of Mizoram to the **National Human Rights Commission(NHRC)** according to which the **legitimacy of the Census figures between 1901 and 1941 cannot be ascertained** as the same are not available with the Census Directorate, Mizoram.
- The report cites Census data that puts the Chakma population at 15,297 in 1951 and 96,972 in 2011.

Who are Chakmas?



- The Chakmas are **ethnic people who lived in the Chittagong Hill Tracts, most of which are located in Bangladesh.**
- Chakmas are predominantly Buddhists. They are found in northeast India, West Bengal, Bangladesh, and Myanmar.
- The **Chakmas living in India are Indian citizens.** Some of them, mostly from Mizoram, live in relief camps in southern Tripura due to tribal conflict with Mizos. These Indian Chakmas living in Tripura take part in Mizoram elections too. The Election Commission sets up polling booths in relief camps.
- The Chakmas living in the Chittagong Hill Tracts fled erstwhile East Pakistan in 1964-65, since they lost their land to the development of the **Kaptai Dam** on the **Karnaphuli River.**
- They also faced religious persecution as they were non-Muslims and did not speak Bengali. They eventually sought asylum in India. The Indian government set up relief camps in Arunachal Pradesh and a majority of them continue to live there even after five decades. (According to the 2011 census, 47,471 Chakmas live in Arunachal Pradesh alone.)

Problem With Chakmas in Arunachal Pradesh

- In the 1960s, the **Chakma refugees were accommodated** in the relief camps constructed in the "vacant lands" of **Tirap, Lohit and Subansiri districts** of the erstwhile **North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA)**, a political division governed by the Union government.
- In **1972, NEFA** was renamed **Arunachal Pradesh** and made a Union Territory, and subsequently, it attained statehood.
- The **locals and regional political parties opposed resettling refugees** in their land fearing that it may change the demography of the State and that they may have to share the limited resources available for them.

Inclusion of Chakmas in Bangladesh

- The **Chakmas opposed their inclusion in undivided Pakistan during Partition**. They later **opposed their inclusion in Bangladesh** when East Pakistan was fighting the Liberation War with West Pakistan, on grounds that they are an ethnic and religious minority group.
- A group of Chakmas resorted to armed conflict with Bangladeshi forces under the name 'Shanti Bahini'. The conflict increased the inflow of refugees to India.
- In **1997**, the **Bangladeshi government headed by Sheikh Hasina** signed a **peace accord** with the **Shanti Bahini**, which resulted in the **end of the insurgency**.
- According to the accord, the Chakma, Marma, Tripura, Murang and Tanchangya were acknowledged as tribes of Bangladesh entitled for benefits and a Regional Council was set up to govern the Hill Tracts. The agreement also laid out plans for the return of land to displaced natives and an elaborate land survey to be held in the Hill Tracts.
- **Bangladesh was willing to take back a section of Chakma refugees living in India**, but most of them were **unwilling, fearing** the return of **religious persecution**.

Granting Citizenship to Chakmas

- In **2015**, the **Supreme Court** directed the Centre to **grant citizenship to Chakma** who had migrated from Bangladesh in 1964-69.
- The order was passed while hearing a plea by the Committee for Citizenship Rights of the Chakmas. Following this, the Centre introduced amendments to the Citizenship Act, 1955.
- The Bill is criticized over making illegal immigrants eligible for citizenship on the basis of religion, which is a violation of Article 14 of the Constitution.

Declining Pepper Price

A steep **fall in the price of pepper** in the harvest season and low production owing to climate vagaries are the major concerns of **pepper growers (Kerala and Karnataka)** in South India.

Reasons For Decline in Price

- **Torrential rain** a few months ago in pepper-growing areas of Kerala and Karnataka caused a sharp decline in crop production.
- **High moisture content** owing to the rains has **triggered fungal diseases** like **quick wilt** and **soft wilt** and has massively destroyed the pepper crop.
- **Cheaper pepper from Vietnam** continues to flood the market through Sri Lanka, and, **aided by a low-duty structure** under the ASEAN (Association of Southeast Nations)

trade agreement, **SAFTA** (South Asian Free Trade Area) and **ISFTA** (Indo-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement) are the major reasons for the declining price.

Major pepper consuming markets such as Patna, Ranchi, Lucknow, Varanasi, Indore, Delhi etc have been flooded with cheap Vietnamese pepper imported illegally as Sri Lankan produce through the borders of Nepal, Myanmar and Bangladesh.

Remedial Measures

- The Ministry of Commerce and Industry had imposed a **minimum import price** (*minimum price per tonne that Indian firms have to pay while importing products into India*) on pepper in 2018 to protect domestic pepper farmers but it is yet to make any positive impact.
- The **Indian Pepper and Spice Traders, Farmers, Producers and Planters Consortium (IPSTPC)** had urged the Commerce Ministry to **remove black pepper from SAFTA and ISFTA import list** in order to save domestic growers but it is yet to be considered.

South Asia Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA)

- The South Asia Free Trade Agreement (SAFTA) was agreed to among the seven South Asia countries that form the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC): Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.
- SAFTA replaces the earlier South Asia Preferential Trade Agreement (SAPTA) and aims to reduce tariffs in order to promote intraregional trade among the SAARC members

Important Facts for Prelims (28th January 2019)

'BHARAT PARV'

- The 4th edition of the Bharat Parv is being organized by **Ministry of Tourism** in collaboration with other central Ministries and State Governments from 26th to 31st January 2019.
- The prime **objective** is to generate a patriotic mood, promote the rich cultural diversity of the country, to promote the idea of '**Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat**'.
- It includes highlights of the Republic Day Parade Tableaux, Performances by the Armed Forces Bands (static and moving), a Multi-Cuisine Food Court, Crafts Mela , Cultural Performances from different regions of the country.

Bharat Ratna Award

- President Ramnath Kovind conferred the Bharat Ratna, on former President **Pranab Mukherjee**, along with social activist **Nanaji Deshmukh (posthumous)**, and Assamese musician **Bhupen Hazarika (posthumous)**.
- The **Bharat Ratna (Jewel of India)**, instituted in 1954 is the highest civilian award of the Republic of India.
- It is awarded in recognition of exceptional service/performance of the highest order in any field of human endeavour.
- The recommendations for the Bharat Ratna are made by the **Prime Minister** to the President with a maximum of three nominees being awarded per year.
- Recipients receive a **Sanad** (certificate) signed by the President and a peepal-leaf-Shaped medallion; there is no monetary grant associated with the award.
- Bharat Ratna recipients rank **seventh** in the Indian order of precedence.

DAMaN Initiative: Odisha

- Odisha Government had launched a malaria control programme – "**Durgama Anchalare Malaria Nirakaran (DAMaN)**" initiative.
- This programme involves mass screening for malaria with treatment of positive cases along with intensified surveillance, mosquito control measures and regular health education activities throughout the year.
- For mass screening and treatment of patients in inaccessible areas, District Health Information System 2 (DHIS2), an open-source web-based surveillance for malaria is used.
- Odisha, which accounts for over 40% per cent malaria burden of the entire country, has reported about 85% decline in average monthly malaria cases in the State.

Malaria

- Malaria, is caused by protozoan parasite plasmodium.
- When this mosquito bites, the parasite is released into the bloodstream. The parasites continue to infect red blood cells.
- Malaria is typically found in tropical and subtropical climates where the parasites can live.
- According to The World Health Organization's **World Malaria Report of 2018**; India is the only country among the 11 highest-burden countries that saw substantial progress in reducing disease burden.
- India had pledged to eliminate the disease by 2030 at the East Asia Summit, 2015.
- India has launched the five-year **National Strategic Plan for Malaria Elimination (NSPME) (2017-2022)**.
- This has marked a shift in focus from malaria "**control**" to "**elimination**".
- **NSPME** includes the target of ending malaria in 571 districts out of India's 678 districts by 2022.

National Chilika Bird Festival

- Recently the second **National Chilika Bird Festival** kickstarted at Mangalajodi in Chilika.
- The festival is organised to promote eco-tourism and preservation of birds in Odisha.
- **National Chilika Bird Festival Award** was given to Mangalajodi Eco-tourism Group for their active involvement in bird protection.
- Mangalajodi, situated in the North Eastern Part of Chilika, is known as the "**Birds Paradise of Asia**" as the place witnesses the highest gathering of more than 10 Lakh species of birds.
- Chilika Lake lies in the Central Asian Flyway stopover site for migratory birds from the Arctic and Sub-Arctic regions during their onward and return migration along the east coast.
- Chilika lake, located in the coastal Odisha is **Asia's largest brackish water lagoon**.
- Chilika lake with its rich bio-diversity and socio-economic importance has been a designated **Ramsar site** (a wetland of international importance) since 1981.
- Another major attraction at Chilika is Irrawaddy dolphins which are often spotted off **Satapada Island** in Chilka Lake.

TRAIN 18

- Indian Railways' fastest train, **Train 18** named, **Vande Bharat Express**.
 - India's first engineless semi-high speed train – "Train 18" - was rolled out by the Integral Coach Factory (ICF) in Chennai, Tamil Nadu.
 - **Features:** CCTV cameras, diffused lighting, automatic doors and footsteps, GPS-based passenger information system.
 - Train 18 was the only new train announced in Budget-2018. It is manufactured under the 'Make in India' initiative at half the cost of import.
 - The railways will now focus on another project – Train 20 - the next generation aluminium-bodied sleeper class trains that will replace the Rajdhani Express trains and is expected to be rolled out by 2020.
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