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United States Commission on International Religious Freedom

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Why in news

Recently, the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) has raised concern over **Citizenship (Amendment) Bill (CAB), 2019**.

- This concern is related to the provision of **granting citizenship based on religion** in CAB, 2019.
- Earlier in August, 2019 USCIRF had also issued a statement against the **National Register of Citizens (NRC)** in Assam and a mob lynching incident in Jharkhand.

Controversial Clause of CAB, 2019

- In 2016, a Bill was introduced to amend the **Citizenship Act, 1955**. However, it lapsed with the dissolution of the 16th Lok Sabha.
Subsequently, the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019 is has been introduced in the Parliament in December 2019.
- The 2019 amendment Bill provides for an exception for **Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians** from **Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan**, with regard to qualification for citizenship.

USCIRF

- It is an independent, bipartisan **U.S. federal government commission** created by the **International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA), 1998**. It monitors the universal right to freedom of religion or belief abroad.
- USCIRF uses **international standards** to monitor religious freedom violations globally, and **makes policy recommendations** to the President, the Secretary of State, and Congress.

- USCIRF Commissioners are **appointed by** the President and Congressional leaders of both political parties.
Their work is supported by a professional, nonpartisan staff. USCIRF is separate from the State Department, although the Department's Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom is a non-voting ex officio Commissioner.
- Its recommendations are **not binding** and acts only as a conscience-keeper for the two branches in the US government — the legislature and the executive.

International Religious Freedom report, 2019

- USCIRF releases International Religious Freedom report annually. The Report consists of country-wise chapters.
- The 2019 report on India discussed mob-related violence, religious conversion, the legal status of minorities and government policies.
- It has placed India on its **Tier 2** category for engaging in or tolerating religious freedom violations that meet at least one of the elements of the "systematic, ongoing, egregious" standard for designation as a "**country of particular concern,**" or **CPC**, under the **International Religious Freedom Act (IRFA)**.

Source: IE