Syllabus subtopic: Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

Prelims and Mains focus: about NPR and its significance; concerns raised and challenges in implementation; Citizenship Act

News: The Union Cabinet chaired by PM Modi, on Tuesday approved over Rs. 3,941.35 crore for updating the National Population Register (NPR) across the country, barring Assam, and Rs. 8,754.23 crore for conducting the Census of India, 2021.

Background

- The announcement comes after more than 20 people were killed in Uttar Pradesh, Assam and Karnataka in violence related to protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) and the NRC.
- The CAA allows citizenship on the basis of religion to undocumented non-Muslim communities from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh who entered India on or before December 31, 2014.
- There are apprehensions that the Act, followed by a country-wide NRC, will benefit non-Muslims excluded from the citizens’ register, while excluded Muslims will have to prove their citizenship.

About NPR

- The NPR exercise, which is to commence from April 2020, aims to collect biometric and demographic details of the “usual resident,” who is defined as a person who has resided in an area for the past six months or more, or a person who intends to reside in that area for the next six months or more. It is mandatory for every ”usual resident” of India to register in the NPR.

- The NPR was updated in 2010 and 2015. The data for NPR was collected in 2010 along with the house-listing phase of Census of India 2011. The 2015 update was done by conducting door-to-door surveys. The digitisation of the updated information has been completed.
The Citizenship Rules, 2003, state that the Centre, by issuing an order, can decide a date to prepare the NPR. It also provides for the creation of a National Register of Indian Citizens (NRIC), or the NRC, which is being bitterly opposed by people across the country, that will flow from data gathered in the NPR.

According to the Rules, a person’s citizenship status will be decided by local officials – whether or not the person will figure in the NRIC or not. No new law or rules are needed to conduct this exercise across the country.

The NRC has so far only been prepared in Assam under the directions of the Supreme Court. Assam’s final NRC, published on August 31, excluded more than 19 lakh of the 3.29 crore applicants. It was the culmination of the Assam Accord signed in 1985 after six-year-long agitation, spearheaded by the All Assam Students’ Union (AASU) and All Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (AAGSP) for detection, disenfranchisement and deportation of foreigners who entered the State after March 24, 1971. Both the Centre and the State government have said the NRC will be repeated in Assam due to huge errors that have crept in.

The NPR will be prepared at the local (village/sub-Town), sub-district, district, State and national level under provisions of the Citizenship Act 1955 and the Citizenship (Registration of Citizens and issue of National Identity Cards) Rules, 2003.

The objective of the NPR is to create a comprehensive identity database of every "usual resident" in the country.

The decennial Census exercise will be conducted in two phases.