Syllabus subtopic: Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests, Indian diaspora.

Prelims and Mains focus: about USCRIF 2019 report, citizenship amendment bill 2019, diplomatic challenges faced by India regarding the passage of CAB

News: In the wake of a statement from United States Congress members on the Citizenship Amendment Bill (CAB), the Union government has spoken to lawmakers across parties in Washington, the External Affairs Ministry said.

Context:

New Delhi is grappling with the diplomatic and logistical fallout of the Bill on relations with Bangladesh and Afghanistan and the coming visit of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

In particular, the Ministry said it had noted a statement from the bipartisan House Foreign Affairs Committee that had said that any “religious test for citizenship” would undermine Indian democracy.

Earlier, the Ministry had reacted strongly to the US Commission for International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) favouring sanctions against Home Minister Amit Shah and other senior leadership.

About USCIRF

- It also publishes International Religious Freedom report

Key findings of International Religious Freedom 2019 report

In its Annual Report, USCIRF unflinchingly describes threats to religious freedom around the world and recommends to the State Department countries for designation as “countries of particular concern” (CPCs) for engaging in or tolerating “systematic, ongoing, egregious violations.”

USCIRF also recommends to the State Department that non-state actors cited for similarly severe violations be designated as “entities of particular concern” (EPCs).

This year, USCIRF has recommended 16 countries for CPC designation and five entities for
EPC designation.

Also, USCIRF placed 12 countries on its **Tier 2 list**, meaning the violations meet one or two, but not all three, of the elements of the systematic, ongoing, egregious test for CPC status.

**Key facts:**

The 16 countries USCIRF recommended for CPC designation include 10 that the State Department so designated in November 2018 – Burma, China, Eritrea, Iran, North Korea, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan – as well as six others that the State Department has not designated – Central African Republic (CAR), Nigeria, Russia, Syria, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam.

The 12 countries on USCIRF’s Tier 2 list are Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Cuba, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Laos, Malaysia, and Turkey.

The five entities recommended for EPC designation include the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), the Taliban in Afghanistan, al-Shabab in Somalia, and new to the list this year, the Houthis in Yemen and Hay’at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) in Syria.

**What it says about India**

India saw an “overall deterioration of religious freedom conditions in 2018”.

India continues to remain a Tier II country. It is in same list since 2009. Tier II countries are those in which violations engaged in or tolerated by government are serious and characterized by at least one of the elements of systematic, ongoing, and egregious (horrible)’.

India is facing declining religious freedom, apart from increased securitisation and politicisation of religion.

It is increasingly becoming difficult to separate religion and politics. It is a tactic which is sometimes intended by those who seek to discriminate against certain religious communities.

Over the last decade Minorities conditions have deteriorated in country. The reason is attributed to extremist groups, anti-conversion laws, cow-protection groups, mob lynching, concerns that millions from Assam will be incorrectly left out of NRC (National Register of Citizen) and a denying international NGOs registration.

**About Citizenship Amendment Bill, 2019**
Note: to know in detail about CAB, click on the link below:

http://prsindia.org/billtrack/citizenship-amendment-bill-2019