Citizenship (Amendment) Bill – II

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Why in news?

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The Lok Sabha passed the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019 recently.

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What does the bill contain?

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- The Bill seeks to facilitate acquisition of citizenship to members of the six communities (Hindus, Jains, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and Parsis) who have come to India till December 31, 2014.
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- The six identified minority communities must be from three countries - Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan, who have faced discrimination and religious persecution in their home country.
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- The minimum residency period for citizenship is being reduced from existing 12 years under the present law to 7 years.
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- The legislation also seeks to provide relief to persecuted migrants who have come through western borders to states like Gujarat, Rajasthan, Delhi and Madhya Pradesh.
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- It will apply to all states and union territories and the beneficiaries will be able to reside in any part of the country.
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What was the concern raised?

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- The Bill faced strong resistance on the fear that it would pave the way for granting citizenship mostly to illegal Hindu migrants from Bangladesh, who came after March 1971, in violation of the 1985 Assam Accord.
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- Nearly 40 lakh people were excluded from the final draft of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam that was published on July 30 last year.
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- The new Bill seeks to negate the NRC, as it would grant citizenship to all Hindus who came to Assam from Bangladesh even after the NRC cut-off date of March 1971.
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What does the government say?

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- The government said that these persecuted migrants will be eligible to apply for citizenship only after due scrutiny and recommendation of district authorities and the State Government.
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- The beneficiaries of Citizenship Amendment Bill can reside in any state of the country.
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- Since the bill will apply to all States and Union Territories of the country, the burden of these persecuted migrants will be shared by the whole country and not only Assam.
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- Also, migrants from these communities were earlier given protection against legal action in years 2015 & 2016.
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- Long term visa provision was also made for them.
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- The proposed amendment will only extend this further to make these persecuted migrants eligible to apply for citizenship.
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Source: The Hindu

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