National Register of Indian Citizens (NRIC)

March 22, 2021
In news: Recently, the Union government informed to Rajya Sabha about the current status of NRIC at national level

National Population Register (NPR) & National Register of Indian Citizens (NRIC)

The National Population Register (NPR)

- The National Population Register (NPR) is a register of all the usual residents which include citizens and non-citizens as well.
- The NPR is the first step towards creation of the National Register of Indian Citizens (NRIC) by verifying the citizenship status of every usual resident.
- NPR was first prepared in 2010 and updated in 2015
- NPR is a database containing a list of all usual residents of the country. Its objective is to have a comprehensive identity database of people residing in the country.
- A usual resident for the purposes of NPR is a person who has resided in a place for six months or more, and intends to reside there for another six months or more

How is it generated?

It is generated through house-to-house enumeration during the "house-listing" phase of the census, which is held once in 10 years.

NRIC & legal basis to it

- As per the provisions contained in Rule 3 of the Citizenship Rules 2003 framed under the Citizenship Act, 1955, the Registrar General of Citizen Registration

shall establish and maintain the National Register of Indian Citizens and prepare the Population Register

- As per the Union government, the preparation of Population Register is a part of preparation of NRIC under provisions of the Citizenship Act, 1955 read with the Citizenship Rules (2003)
- According to Section 14A of the Citizenship Act, 1955 (which was inserted in 2004), the Central Government may compulsorily register every citizen of India and issue a national identity card to him; and it may maintain a National Register of Indian Citizens

Difference between Census and NPR

- The census involves a detailed questionnaire, there were 29 items to be filled up in the 2011 census aimed at eliciting the particulars of every person, including age, sex, marital status, children, occupation, birthplace, mother tongue, religion, disability and whether they belonged to any Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe.
- On the other hand, the NPR collects basic demographic data and biometric particulars.
- Once the basic details of the head of the family are taken by the enumerator, an acknowledgement slip will be issued. This slip may be required for enrollment in NPR, whenever that process begins.
- Once the details are recorded in every local (village or ward), sub-district (tehsil or taluk), district and State level, there will be a population register at each of these levels. Together, they constitute the National Population Register.

Legal basis to NPR and Census

- The census is legally backed by the Census Act, 1948
- The NPR is a mechanism outlined in a set of rules framed under the Citizenship Act, 1955.

- Section 14A was inserted in the Citizenship Act, 1955, in 2004, providing for the compulsory registration of every citizen of India and the issue of a "national identity card" to him or her. It also said the Central government may maintain a "National Register of Indian Citizens".
- The Registrar General India shall act as the "National Registration Authority" (and will function as the Registrar General of Citizen Registration). Incidentally, the Registrar General is also the country's Census Commissioner.
- The NPR is the first step towards establishing the NRIC.

What is the link between NPR and Aadhaar?

- Better targeting and delivery of benefits and services under the government was one of the early objectives of the NPR.
- During the early days of the NPR enrolment, under the United Progressive Alliance regime, the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) scheme for issuance of Aadhaar numbers was also concurrently on.
- There was a conflict between the Union Home Ministry, which administers the NPR, and UIDAI, leaving the **impression that there was duplication of work**, as both involved gathering personal particulars, including biometric data.
- Finally, they **agreed that both databases will exist with different objectives**, and that each will use the other's biometric data.
- Those already enrolled for Aadhaar need not give their biometric details again during NPR.
- At the same time, data captured for **NPR would be sent to UIDAI for "de-duplication".**
- **In case of discrepancy** between Aadhaar and **NPR data, the latter would preva**il. The present regime decided to update the NPR originally created after the 2011 Census.

What will happen after the NPR is compiled?

- **Out of the NPR, a set of all usual residents of India, the government proposes to create a database of "citizens of India". Thus, the "National Register of Indian Citizens" (NRIC) is a sub-set of the NPR.**
- **The NRIC will be prepared at the local, sub-district, district and State levels after verifying the citizenship status of the residents.**

- The Citizenship (Registration of Citizens and Issue of National Identity Cards) Rules, 2003 spells out the rules for operationalising the idea of registering all citizens and issuing national identity cards to them. However, so far, there has been no decision on introducing a national identity card.
- The rules say the particulars of every family and individual found in the Population Register "shall be verified and scrutinized by the Local Registrar …". In the process, details of those "whose citizenship is doubtful" will be entered with a comment suggesting further inquiry.
- The family or individual will be informed about it and given an opportunity of being heard by the Sub-district or Taluk Registrar of Citizen Registration before a final decision is made on excluding them from the NRIC. The decision should be made within 90 days.

Is the NRIC complete after this step?

- No. A draft of the Local Register of Indian Citizens shall be published to invite objections or claims for inclusion or corrections.
- Any objection or request for inclusion must be made within 30 days of the publication of the draft. The sub-district or taluk registrar shall summarily dispose of the objections within 90 days.
- Thereafter, the entries in the Local Register will be

transferred to the National Registrar.
- Any person aggrieved by an exclusion order can appeal to the District Registrar within 30 days, and the appeal should be disposed of within 90 days.
- In case the appeal succeeds, the names of those concerned would be added to the NRIC.

The government is yet to notify a date for generation of the NRIC. It has not yet prescribed rules for the sort of documentary proof that would be required to prove citizenship. The government has said that any document that shows date of birth or place of birth, or both, will be sufficient. And that common documents will be accepted, and those unable to produce documents may produce witnesses or other proof supported by members of the community.