

21 – 07 – 2022

News: Status of Minority in India

- Recently, while hearing a petition, the Supreme Court has said that the Minority status of religious and linguistic communities is “State-dependent”.

About the Petition

- Petition complains that followers of Judaism, Bahaism, and Hinduism are the real minorities in Ladakh, Mizoram, Lakshadweep, Kashmir, Punjab and the North-East States.
- However, they cannot establish and administer educational institutions of their choice because of the non-identification of ‘minority’ at the State level.
- Religious communities such as Hindus here are socially, economically, politically non-dominant and numerically inferior in several States.

Ruling by Supreme Court

- Every person in India can be a minority in one State or the other.
- A Marathi can be a minority outside his home State e.g., Maharashtra. Similarly, a Kannada-speaking person may be in minority in States other than Karnataka.

- Court indicated that a religious or linguistic community which is a minority in a particular state can inherently claim protection and the right to administer and run its own educational institutions under Articles 29 and 30 of the Constitution.

Notified Minorities in India

- Currently, only those communities notified under section 2(c) of the National Commission for Minorities Act, 1992, by the central government are regarded as minority.
- Despite the Supreme Court's 11-judge bench judgment in T.M.A Pai case, which clearly determined that linguistic and religious minorities must be identified at the state level rather than at the national level, section 2(c) of the National Commission for Minorities (NCM) Act 1992 gave the Centre "unbridled power" to inform minorities.
- In 1992, with the enactment of the NCM Act, 1992, the MC became a statutory body and was renamed as the NCM.
- In 1993, the first Statutory National Commission was set up and five religious communities viz. The Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists and Zoroastrians (Parsis) were notified as minority communities.
- In 2014, Jains were also notified as a minority community.

Constitutional Provisions for Minority

Article 29

- Article 29 provides that any section of the citizens residing in any part of India having a distinct language, script or culture of its own, shall have the right to conserve the same.
- It grants protection to both religious minorities as well as linguistic minorities.
- However, the SC held that the scope of this article is not necessarily restricted to minorities only, as use of the word 'section of citizens' in the Article includes minorities as well as the majority.

Article 30

- All minorities shall have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice.
- The protection under Article 30 is confined only to minorities (religious or linguistic) and does not extend to any section of citizens (as under Article 29).

Article 350-B

- The 7th Constitutional (Amendment) Act 1956 inserted this article which provides for a Special Officer for Linguistic Minorities appointed by the President of India.
- It would be the duty of the Special Officer to investigate all matters relating to the safeguards provided for linguistic minorities under the Constitution.

News: Green Pit Viper

- Recently, on World Snake Day (16th July, 2022), there was consensus for developing effective antivenom against the venom of the Green Pit Viper.

Pit Viper

- Pit viper, any species of viper (subfamily Crotalinae) that has, in addition to two movable fangs, a heat-sensitive pit organ between each eye and nostril which together help it accurately aim its strike at its warm-blooded prey.
- Pit vipers are found from deserts to rainforests.
- They may be terrestrial, arboreal, or aquatic. Some species lay eggs; others produce live young.

- The venomous pit vipers species includes **hump-nosed pit viper, Mangrove pit viper and Malabar Pit Viper.**
- **Russell's viper and Saw-scaled Viper are two most venomous vipers species found in India and member of big four poisonous and deadliest snakes in India.**
- These snake species are **responsible for the majority of snake bites in India.**

Concerns related to Green Pit Viper

- **Green pit viper is not more lethal than Russell's viper, but the hemotoxic venom it injects prevents the blood in the body from clotting resulting in internal bleeding.**
- Moreover, the **antivenom available in India cannot counter the venom of the green pit viper.**
- There are among 15 venomous snakes like the monocled cobra, the banded krait, the lesser black krait, the great black krait, the mountain pit viper and the redneck keelback out of 64 recorded so far across Northeast India.
- Most of the snakebite cases in the region involve different species of the green pit viper, making up the other venomous snakes.
- There is **lack of standardised reporting or under-reporting of snake bites.**
- The **current available data say there are more than 1.4 million cases resulting in 1,25,000 fatalities annually.**