

**1. What is the Rohingya Muslims issue? How is it affecting India's interests and relations with Myanmar? Examine.****Approach**

Write a comprehensive introduction giving the background on who the Rohingyas are and add statistics. In next part write Indian stand and reasons which were in view of India-Myanmar relations. Further in brief write what are Indian interests at stake. In conclusion write reasoning for such stand and a way forward.

**Introduction:**

The Rohingya refugee crisis refers to the mass migration of Rohingyas (Rohingya Muslim people) from Myanmar (Burma) to Bangladesh, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia and India. Described by the UN as the world's most persecuted people, 1.1 million Rohingya people live in Myanmar. They live predominantly in Rakhine state, where they have co-existed uneasily alongside Buddhists for decades.

**Body**

Few years ago, religious and ethnic tensions between the Rohingya Muslims and the Rakhine Buddhists (who make up the majority of the population in Myanmar) escalated into widespread, deadly rioting. Hundreds of thousands were forced to flee. Since then, ongoing violent attacks have forced even more people to leave their homes.

They were not granted full citizenship by Myanmar. They were classified as "resident foreigners or associate citizens". They speak a dialect of Bengali and not Burmese. The Rohingya population is denied citizenship under the 1982 Myanmar nationality law. Myanmar law does not recognize the ethnic minority as one of the eight national indigenous races.

**Effects on India's interests and relationships with Myanmar**

- India has been receiving Rohingya refugees and allowing them to settle in the different parts of the country over the years, especially after the communal violence in the state of Rakhine in 2012. According to the Ministry of Home Affairs, there are approximately 40,000 Rohingyas living in India. They have reportedly reached India from Bangladesh through the land route over the years.
- However, India considers the refugee crisis as an internal affair of Myanmar. India took the side of the Myanmar government because it was concerned that raising the issue publicly might push Myanmar towards China as it was building relations with the then newly formed quasi-democratic government.
- India also has economic interests with its companies holding stakes in Shwe Gas field off the coast of Rakhine State. Along with energy interests and plans

to build cross-border pipelines, India also has a connectivity interest to link its landlocked northeastern region with the Bay of Bengal through Rakhine State

- These include a joint project with Myanmar that includes development of port at Sittwe, inland-waterway in the Kaladan River, and road construction to connect it with India's Northeast. Instability in the Rakhine State could have adverse effects on these interests.
- The crisis has also acquired a security dimension with concerns being raised over the infiltration of Islamic extremism amongst the Rohingyas, who have grown increasingly desperate over their plight. The massive refugee outflow has created a serious humanitarian crisis that carries implications on regional stability and security.
- In 2017, India launched "Operation Insaniyat" to provide relief assistance for the refugee camps in Bangladesh. India's decision to extend help fits into its desire to de-incentivise Rohingya refugees entering into India. Further, India would maintain constructive engagement with both Myanmar and Bangladesh, and that the international community needs to handle the situation with restraint, keeping in mind the welfare of the population.
- In 2012 December, India's external affairs Minister visited Rakhine and donated 1 million dollars for relief. India signed a development programme for Rakhine State in Myanmar late last year which was designed to assist the Myanmar government in Rakhine State to build housing infrastructure for displaced persons.

#### Effects on India

- Migration - In India, there are nearly 40,000 Rohingya refugees, with 16,500 registered with the office of the United Nations Human Rights Commissioner.
- Islamic extremism - Efforts of radical Islamists to influence some of the Rohingya youth, to capitalise on the situation and promote anti-India activities is possible
- Political tensions - They are spread over several cities and states Jammu, New Delhi, Jaipur and some places in Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and the north-east.
- There are a few places in the country where politically instigated attempts are being made to re-locate them.
- North-East security - India has a stake in the security conditions in upper western Myanmar adjoining the Naga self-administered zone where the Khaplang faction of the National Socialist Council of Nagalim operates.

#### Conclusion

The issue of Rohingya is a critical one in Indian neighbourhood. Historically India has been accommodating of the persecuted minorities from historical times to the modern era. But the stand taken by India on recent issue is purely based on the political reality of the Indo-Myanmar relationships and security concerns which India faces. Further it would be imperative that India plays a role in settling the issue with persuading ASEAN nations and leveraging its partnership with major powers.

**2. Do you think the implementation of a nationwide National Register of Citizens in would actually strengthen India's ties with the neighbours? Critically evaluate.****Approach**

Introduce with why the given issues was in news. In next part write how the NRC will actually help in fostering better relations. Then counter the thesis with an anti-thesis on how the NRC process can also backfire in context of neighbourhood relations. In conclusion take a pragmatic stand and positive outlook on the NRC exercise .

**Introduction**

Recently, according to the ministry of external affairs, India has reached out to countries across the world, especially its neighbours, on the issues of the new citizenship law and the proposed National Register of Citizens to make sure that the relationship between India and its neighbours remains strong and without any misgivings.

**Body**

The National Register of Citizens (NRC) holds all the important information of the Indian citizens required for their identification which will be maintained by the Government of India. The legal framework for NRC is laid down in the Citizenship Act of 1955 as amended in 2004.

The issue of illegal immigration is majorly between India and Bangladesh, due to historical factors, rather than any other neighbour. NRC is an exercise to stem the tide and deal with the issue of illegal immigration.

In this regard, the implementation of a nationwide NRC would help strengthen India's relations with her neighbours in the following manner:

- NRC exercise would be completely an internal matter of India and as a sovereign nation which respects others sovereignty, India has every right to carry out actions internally, which it deems fit.
- Illegal immigration from Bangladesh, comprising both Hindus and Muslims, is an important issue from the national security perspective of India. A large number of Bangladeshi immigrants are illegally living in India. Bilateral dealings of such an important issue thus becomes important.
- The issue is further complicated as sometime back, the Rohingya refugees originally from Myanmar started infiltrating into India through Bangladesh. Association of some Rohingyas with terrorist organisations make it an internal security for India and needs to be dealt with concerned parties where relations will stabilise with resolution of the problem.
- Bangladesh has already documented its citizens and maintains a biometric record of them. The National Identity Registration Wing (NIDW) was created within the Bangladesh Election Commission for that purpose. India too is

justified in undertaking a similar exercise. This will help India get a grip on the problem.

- Once the documentation of citizens is done in India, both sides can share their database. This will help manage the problem in a much more amicable manner. As the India-Bangladesh relationship is currently strong and trust levels on both sides are high, this is the right time to deal with the issue of illegal migration.
- As the NRC exercise would help in establishing a detailed database of citizens for India, it would help in dealing with illegal immigration and as the issue of illegal immigration is concerned mainly only with India-Bangladesh relations, India's relations with its other neighbours would largely be unaffected.

At the same time, many have argued that NRC exercise would not strengthen India's relations with its neighbours due to the following factors:

- The partition of India along religious lines had left India with extraordinary challenges about sustaining religious harmony at home and maintaining reasonable relations with Pakistan and Bangladesh. This Pandora's box would open again affecting relations, especially with Bangladesh.
- India's Neighbourhood first and Act East policy could be affected as a result of the NRC exercise and its outcomes where Bangladesh and Myanmar might face the inflow of disenfranchised people from India.
- Regional destabilization could create serious ramifications not just for South Asia, but the wider Indo-Pacific as well. Bangladesh is already struggling under the weight of the refugee crisis of the Rohingya fleeing violence in Myanmar — any added people movement would be beyond its capacity to facilitate and require a significant international response.
- The rhetoric of minority persecution in neighbouring countries embedded in CAA-NRC exercise would certainly affect India's image and relations with concerned neighbours.
- This phenomenon is in line with the growing global trend where internal matters are affecting countries relations with others and in case of India, Bangladesh is clearly affected as India would handover illegal immigrants to it after the NRC exercise.
- China would certainly try to exploit the faultlines between India and its neighbours emerging out of the NRC exercise. This would help it in its string of pearls strategy against India in India's neighbourhood.

### **Conclusion**

The issue of illegal migration in the neighbourhood relationships cannot be swept under the carpet. It will continue to be a stumbling block in the sustenance of a stable relationship. It will be better if all sides look at the issue dispassionately especially when the trust levels are high and the NRC exercise may be a means towards sustainable neighbourhood relations.

**3. Why is looking west is a geopolitical imperative for India? Critically examine.****Approach**

Introduce generally with what the term looking west refers to in context of India foreign policy. In next part mention the geopolitical imperative which India is trying to achieve with this policy and balance with the challenges which the policy might face given the volatile nature of the region. In conclusion take a positive and balanced view of the policy

**Introduction**

The “Look West” policy assumed significance and focussed attention in India’s policy approach with Prime Minister Modi’s remarks at the ‘Make in India’ conference in New Delhi on 26th September, 2014, when he said, “For a long time Look East policy is under discussion, I would like to talk about Link West”. Thenceforth, Indian policy and diplomatic outreach has put the region into a policy priority and the “Look West” policy became a bright spot on Indian policy pursuit and a multi-layered engagement began.

**Body**

The strategic location of the Middle East and India’s multiple linkages from the past to the present make it immensely important for India’s pursuit of power. The previous policies have been limited to energy security owing to intractable political fault lines and fractured socio-religious landscape in the region – like Arab-Israel contest and Iran-Saudi rivalry.

**Geopolitical imperatives of the ‘Look-West’ Policy**

- A constructive and dauntless “look-west” policy from India would acknowledge the geopolitical significance of Pakistan.
- Rather than being an obstacle, Pakistan could become a link between the Indian subcontinent and the energy-rich region.
- Pakistan could also act as a transit route for the movement of people, goods and energy between India and the West Asian region.
- Pakistan has begun to move the self-perception of its location from geopolitics to geo-economics.
- More importantly, Pakistan’s ‘Look East’ Policy had developed considerably as evident from its admission into the security arm of the ASEAN.
- India will gain overland access to Iran, Afghanistan and Central Asia. Currently, India has to circumnavigate Pakistan and get access to Afghanistan through Iran.
- The essence of this policy was that an India-Pakistan reconciliation would be meaningful because it would increase the potential for regional economic integration in the subcontinent and also trans-regional cooperation between countries in Central Asia, South Asia and the Gulf.

- Resolving the Kashmir issue is vital for unleashing the geo-economic potential of the region. Pakistan itself has delinked its Kashmir issue with India and the construction of pipelines overland from Iran and Central Asia to India.
- The building of pipelines across Pakistan's territory would also make it easy to construct highways linking India with Afghanistan and Iran.
- India could offer to negotiate trade and transit treaties involving all the 4 nations.
- India could also suggest cooperation with Pakistan in encouraging free trade between South Asia and the Gulf Cooperation Council. Any permanent resolution of the Kashmir issue would inevitably involve creative political cooperation across the divided state. It would also necessitate the complete normalization of Indo-Pak relations.
- Projects like interconnected electricity grids, natural gas pipelines, and transnational highway roads will realise the new strategic conception of Pakistan as India's gateway to the West. India, in turn, will be Pakistan's gateway to the East.

#### Challenges in India's look west policy

Despite India's efforts to cultivate ties with the Arab Gulf, Israel and Iran, each presents potential challenges and risks.

- First, Israel's improving status with the Arab world may not endure. Another intifada or revival of support for the Palestinians by the wider Arab public could put pressure on Gulf regimes to reverse their current rapprochement with Israel. If that should happen, India could find its position exposed as well, given its own growing closeness with Israel.
- Second, India's engagement with Iran over Chabahar is unlikely to eliminate the Pakistan/China option.
  - One reason is the more modest scale of India's efforts in Central Asia and the Middle East, especially when compared to China's Belt and Road. Some current estimates suggest China has already spent about \$68 billion on its China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) alone and approximately \$200 billion on all other projects to date.
  - Another is that Indian ambitions may become redundant, especially if Iran and Pakistan are able to overcome differences between themselves to cooperate and link their ports as they have claimed.
  - Finally, other powers, such as the United States, could derail Indian efforts. Indeed, the Indo-Iranian agreement over Chabahar has been repeatedly delayed, partly because of US sanctions against Iran.
- The third challenge for India in the Middle East: the vulnerability of its citizens and economic interests. In recent months it has since deployed two warships and surveillance aircraft to the Gulf to protect its shipping there, while making it clear that it will not join the US-led coalition that is being formed there. The Indian decision may also reflect its own tensions with the US, most notably in the growing trade war between the two.

- Fourth, as the US-Iran dispute shows, India is susceptible to regional conflicts over which it has little control. Perhaps the most notable of these is the Saudi-Iranian rivalry and the boycott of Qatar by Saudi Arabia and the UAE. In both cases, the struggle for influence in the region are key; Saudi Arabia and the UAE also distrust Iran and Qatar for their support of Islamist groups. Similarly, Israel suspects Iran of sponsoring Hamas and Hezbollah against it.

### **Conclusion**

The Middle East has become more multipolar, with power diffused among a variety of regional and extra-regional actors. Within this mix India has pursued an approach that balances against different parties and their rivalries. This policy has helped India to handle each country in a different way rather than aligning its interest with any single partner. This has been proved with increasing socioeconomic and cultural relations with the countries of West Asia especially with Saudi Arabia, Iran, UAE, Oman amid the crises which have intermittently affected these nations.

