

WEEKLY
31 AUG TO
6 SEPT

CURRENT
AFFAIRS

BALANCED BUT **REFORMS** NEED TO ACCELERATE

India's real GDP growth for Q1:2024 - 25 fell to 6.7%, the lowest in 5 quarters, below the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) estimate of 7.1%.

The fall in GDP growth reflects a slowdown in economic momentum, although gross value added (GVA) grew slightly higher at 6.8%.

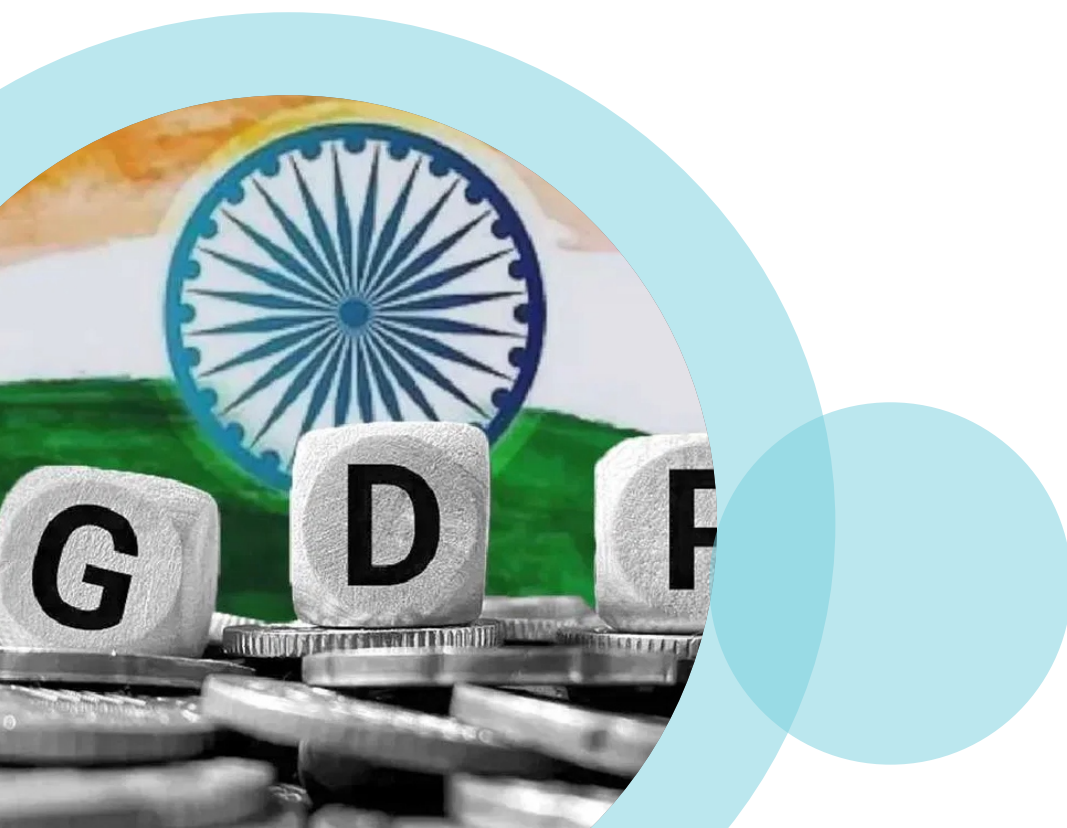
Public expenditure and private consumption

The government's plan to raise capital expenditure by 17% has been hampered by the general election, which requires intensive efforts to meet expenditure targets.

Meanwhile, private consumption rose to a six-quarter high of 7.4% on the back of easing inflation, although food prices remain high.

Uncertain monsoon impact

The monsoon, though better than last year, has been erratic, hurting agricultural growth. Agriculture GVA grew to 2% but the coming weeks will determine the sector's recovery and its impact on food inflation. RBI is concerned about the loss of a potential 1% GDP growth if interest rate cuts are delayed.



PACIFIC ISLANDS FORUM MEMBERS BACK JOINT POLICING PLAN

At the Pacific Islands Forum in Tonga, leaders backed a landmark joint policing plan led by Australia, which includes the establishment of 4 regional police training centers and a multinational crisis response force, funded with \$271 million.

While countries such as Fiji praised the initiative, others, including Solomon Islands, expressed concern about its impact on domestic security.

TAIWAN'S STATUS PROTECTED

Efforts by Solomon Islands to exclude Taiwan as a development partner have been rejected. The forum has confirmed Taiwan's participation, despite pressure from China, whose special envoy expressed surprise at the decision.

CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

Leaders have also focused on climate change, planning a global pledging event to raise funds for a climate initiative based in Tonga.

Deep sea mining was another contentious issue, with members such as Palau calling for a moratorium until the environmental impacts were better understood. The forum has agreed to hold further discussions on the topic.



DISCOVERY OF NEW CANCER TREATMENT TARGETS

WHY IN NEWS?

Researchers at the Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science (IACS) have identified a new target for killing cancer cells, focusing on breast cancer. This discovery has the potential to enhance the effectiveness of existing cancer therapies.

MECHANISM OF ACTION

The study highlights how cancer cells respond to targeted chemotherapy and develop resistance. The identified target involves two key molecules: the CDK1 protein and the TDP1 enzyme, which play critical roles in cell cycle regulation and DNA repair during cell division.

POTENTIAL THERAPEUTIC STRATEGIES

The researchers propose using a combinatorial approach targeting both CDK1 and TDP1 to disrupt cancer cell survival mechanisms. This dual targeting could make it harder for cancer cells to develop resistance and could potentially lead to new, more effective cancer treatments.

CLINICAL RELEVANCE

The findings suggest that by inhibiting these proteins, particularly in breast cancer, the treatment could prevent cancer cells from repairing DNA damage, leading to their death. This approach could significantly improve patient outcomes by reducing the likelihood of cancer relapse and increasing the effectiveness of chemotherapy.

CENTRE'S INITIATIVE TO BOOST 2G ETHANOL PRODUCTION

Why in News?

The Government of India is focusing on enhancing second-generation (2G) ethanol production as part of its broader strategy to reduce fuel imports and promote sustainable energy. This initiative aligns with the recently unveiled BioE3 policy aimed at boosting biotechnology-centric manufacturing in the country.

Establishment of Enzyme-Manufacturing Facilities

The Department of Biotechnology plans to set up enzyme-manufacturing facilities, crucial for converting agricultural residues like rice straw into ethanol. These enzymes are essential for the 2G ethanol production process, which uses biomass instead of traditional sources like molasses.

PROPOSED PLANT LOCATIONS

The first plant is expected to be established in Manesar, Haryana, and will likely supply enzymes to other bio-ethanol plants in regions like Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, and the existing plant in Panipat, Haryana. The Panipat plant, set up by Indian Oil Corporation, is a first-of-its-kind facility utilizing rice stubble, helping to curb pollution caused by stubble burning in North India.

CRITICAL INGREDIENTS AND TECHNOLOGY

The enzymes required for the 2G ethanol production are derived from genetically engineered fungi, making them efficient in breaking down organic matter like rice stubble. The use of locally developed enzymes could significantly reduce the cost of ethanol production.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACT

This initiative is expected to help India meet its ethanol production targets, reducing dependency on imports and contributing to environmental sustainability. By converting agricultural waste into fuel, the program also offers an alternative to the harmful practice of stubble burning, which is a major source of air pollution in regions like Punjab and Haryana.

IMPACT OF TALIBAN'S MORALITY LAW ON AFGHAN WOMEN

Why in News?

The Taliban's recent decree on the "Propagation of Virtue and Prevention of Vice" in Afghanistan has introduced strict regulations specifically targeting women. This law, rooted in the Taliban's interpretation of Sharia, seeks to enforce traditional norms and has drawn significant global criticism.



KEY PROVISIONS OF THE LAW

The law mandates that women must cover their entire bodies and faces, excluding even their voices from being heard in public. Women are required to be accompanied by a male guardian when traveling, and interaction between unrelated men and women is severely restricted. Furthermore, traditional children's games and certain male grooming practices are banned.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND DEVELOPMENT

The imposition of such regulations is not entirely new in Afghanistan. Similar laws were enforced during the Taliban's previous rule in the 1990s, severely limiting women's rights and freedoms. The current law is viewed as a continuation and formalization of these regressive policies, potentially leading to harsher punishments and increased oppression.

DOMESTIC REACTION

The new law has led to various forms of resistance within Afghanistan, with women subtly defying the restrictions, such as raising their voices in public and using covert means to express dissent. Underground schools for girls have re-emerged, and women continue to protest the loss of their rights, despite the severe risks involved.

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

The international community, including the United Nations, has condemned the law, labeling it as oppressive and intolerable. Global pressure is being mounted on the Taliban to repeal the law and respect women's rights. However, the Taliban's rigid stance and historical precedent suggest that significant change may be challenging to achieve without sustained international efforts.

TWO PEOPLE WERE KILLED AND SIX INJURED IN NEW VIOLENCE IN MANIPUR AFTER A FOUR-MONTH BREAK.

Manipur Experiences Violence Again After a Four-Month Break

After a four-month break, violence returned to Manipur on Sunday when suspected extremists used "high-tech drones" to carry out a gun-and-bomb attack that left two people dead and at least six others injured, including two police officers and a television journalist.

The attack took place in the villages of Koutruk and Kadangband.

The Kuki-majority hill area of Kangpokpi is adjacent to the Meitei-dominated Imphal West district, where the police said the shooting and bombing started at 2:30 p.m. at the villages of Koutruk and Kadangband.

Attacks Persistent and Security Forces' Retaliation

Attacks persisted until the reporting time, at which point Manipur Rifles and India Reserve Battalion members retaliated. After dusk, some residences were also set on fire.



Attacker casualties and injuries

The attacks claimed the lives of Ngangbam Surbala, a 31-year-old lady, and an unidentified man from Koutruk. The woman was shot in the head and killed. Elangbam Mushuk, a journalist, sustained injuries while reporting the violence. The Meitei community is represented by the dead and the injured, seven of whom are women. At a hospital, each injured person is receiving medical attention.

DRONES WERE USED IN THE ATTACK

The terrorists used a drone to drop bombs during the attack, according to the residents of the two villages that were impacted.

People can be seen scrambling for shelter in a supposedly recorded video of the incident that has been shared on social media, while a guy can be heard declaring, "**Drone bombing has started.**"

HIGHLIGHTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA VIDEOS CHAOS CONTEXT: TRIBAL AND NON-TRIBAL

Prior to the April Lok Sabha election, there was a firefight between the non-tribal Meiteis and the tribal Kuki-Zos.

A day after the Kuki-Zo people staged protests in many hill districts calling for a separate administration for the tribe, attacks were launched on the villages of Koutruk and Kadangband.

A high alert went out.

CONFLICT: FOLLOWING THE INCIDENT, A HIGH ALERT WAS ISSUED

Following the event, Imphal West District Magistrate Th. Kirankumar issued an order under Section 163 of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita imposing limitations

THE DGP'S MAXIMUM ALERTNESS DIRECTIVE

Rajiv Singh, the Director-General of Police of Manipur, sent out an "alert message" ordering all district superintendents of police to maintain the highest level of alertness, particularly in the periphery.

"Every force present in their domains needs to be informed." For the purpose of averting any unfortunate disaster, the forces must be well coordinated. There must be joint combining activities. To avoid any unfortunate incident, ADGP, zonal IGPs, and range DIGPs must closely monitor the state of law and order.

THE USE OF ADVANCED DRONES

ESCALATES CONFLICT.



The Manipur Police claimed in a statement that the radicals used sophisticated drones to drop multiple rocket-propelled grenades. **"While drone bombs have**

long been used in general warfare, this recent use of drones to deliver explosives against civilians and security forces represents a significant escalation."

"It is impossible to rule out the engagement of highly qualified individuals, perhaps with technical know-how and assistance. The statement further stated that authorities are keeping a close eye on the situation and are ready to act in any emergency."A bid to sabotage peace"

THE STATE GOVERNMENT CONDEMNS THE ATTACK AND ATTEMPTS TO SABOTAGE PEACE EFFORTS.

The State administration said in a statement that it became aware of the attack on the defenseless people, which was allegedly carried out by Kuki militants utilizing "drones, bombs, and many sophisticated weapons."

The incident was an attempt to thwart attempts to establish peace. "Such an act of terrorizing the unarmed villagers is viewed very seriously by the State government when it is putting all possible efforts towards bringing normalcy and peace in the State."

CITIES IN ASIA ARE EXPANDING UPWARDS RATHER THAN OUTWARDS URBAN GROWTH TRENDS

A study reported in Nature Cities shows that cities, particularly in Asia, are growing vertically faster than they are expanding outwards.

With the global urban population set to increase by two billion between 1990 and 2020, cities have increasingly turned to high-rise buildings to accommodate growing populations.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A team of scientists analyzed more than 1,500 cities using satellite data to study both the lateral spread and vertical growth of urban areas.

The data indicated that while outward expansion has slowed, the amount of city structures has increased significantly, indicating a trend towards vertical growth.

ASIA LEADS IN VERTICAL GROWTH

East Asian cities, particularly in China, are leading the way in this upward growth, with cities with populations over 10 million seeing the most pronounced changes in the 2010s.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Urban planning experts suggest the need for policies to manage the shift from horizontal to vertical expansion and address its potential impact on infrastructure and the environment.

Do AI AGENTS PREDICT

THE NEXT WAVE OF AUTONOMY OR ACCOUNTABILITY?



AI assistants like Siri and Alexa have been around for over a decade. The latest advancement, AI agents (AIA), are more capable and efficient, classified into three types: reactive agents, learning agents and cognitive agents.

COGNITIVE ABILITIES OF AIA

Cognitive AIAs, the most advanced, can reason, learn and make decisions autonomously. They integrate with devices via the Internet of Things and handle complex tasks such as travel planning by analyzing user communications and preferences.

Recent innovations include AIA's management of warehouse operations and increased productivity in various industries.

ETHICAL AND LEGAL CONCERNS

The rise of the AIA raises concerns about privacy, accountability and liability. These agents access large amounts of personal data, requiring a strong legal framework to protect users.

Scholars argue for shared responsibility between users and developers, especially when AIA lacks legal personality. AIA regulation is closely linked to broader AI governance, which calls for a nuanced approach to addressing emerging challenges.

GENES OF THRONES: GENOMES OF RULERS TELL HOW EMPIRES ROSE AND FELL

The origins of ancient empires are often mysterious, with the stories of many founders obscured by time and oral tradition.

Scholars believe that these empires began as small nomadic groups led by noble families, who united tribes through war, disease, and migration.

UNLOCKING HISTORY WITH PALEOGENOMICS

Paleogenomics, the study of ancient DNA, has become an important tool in unraveling the mysteries of these ancient societies. For example, DNA analysis has traced the Avars, who once ruled parts of Europe, back to Mongolia.

Similarly, studies of the Xeonganu and Longboard empires highlight the importance of genetic diversity and aristocratic intermarriage in their social structure.

ADVANCING HISTORICAL UNDERSTANDING

These findings underscore the growing role of paleogenomics in unraveling human history, providing insights into the migration patterns, cultures, and social structures of ancient civilizations.



THE 'APARAJITA'

ANTI-RAPE BILL IN WEST BENGAL

WHY IN THE NEWS?

During a state Legislative Assembly session, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee addresses the assembly following the introduction of the Aparajita Woman and Child Bill (West Bengal Criminal Laws and Amendment Bill 2024).

APARAJITA WOMAN AND CHILD BILL (WEST BENGAL CRIMINAL LAWS AND AMENDMENT BILL 2024).

THE ANTI-RAPE BILL WAS UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED BY THE WEST BENGAL ASSEMBLY.

OBJECTIVE OF THE BILL

Referred to as the 'Aparajita Woman and Child Bill (West Bengal Criminal Laws and Amendment) Bill 2024', the law endeavors to fortify safeguards for women and children by the revision and addition of new measures concerning sexual offenses and rape.

The following clauses will be included in the new anti-rape bill by the Mamata government:

Life Sentence without parole for those found guilty :

The bill proposes a fine and a life term without the possibility of release for individuals found guilty of rape.

If the victim of the crime is left dead or in a vegetative state, the guilty will be executed.

The Bill proposes a fine and the death penalty for anyone found guilty of rape if their actions cause the victim to pass away or go into a vegetative state.

STRICTER GUIDELINES UNDER THE POCSO ACT

The state will further tighten the POCSO Act's restrictions.

Task Force Aparajita

In accordance with the bill's terms, a task force will be established to punish the accused within 21 days following the preliminary report. After that, a trial must be completed in 30 days.

Sufficient security along the routes traveled by medical professionals and nurses.

The state government has approved Rs 120 crores for this.

Acid attack convictions carry a life sentence without the possibility of release.

If found guilty of acid assaults, Bar and Bench states that the punishment is life in jail without the possibility of release.

NINE MAOISTS DIED IN AN ONGOING CONFLICT IN DANTEWADA, CHHATTISGARH

WHY IN THE NEWS?

Nine Maoists were slain by a combined District Reserve Guard (DRG) and Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) team during a continuing conflict in Chhattisgarh's Dantewada district.

ARMAMENTS FOUND DURING SIGNIFICANT ANTI-MAOIST OPERATION IN DANTEWADA

Based on intelligence reports indicating the presence of Maoists in the area, the operation was initiated. Nine Maoists have been slain, and numerous weapons have been found at the scene, including a .303 rifle, a .315 bore rifle, and a Self-Loading Rifle (SLR).

EVERY SECURITY EMPLOYEE IN DANTEWADA IS SAFE FUNCTION

Every jawan taking part in the operation is safe. The search is currently ongoing, and more information will be released when it is finished.

COMBATING LEFT-WING INSURGENCY: AN INTERSTATE COORDINATION MEETING

In the midst of increased anti-Maoist operations, Union Home Minister Amit Shah presided over an interstate coordination meeting of Left-wing insurgency-affected states in Chhattisgarh late last month.



Union Government Establishes New Forward Operating Bases to Step Up **Anti-Maoist Efforts**

According to official figures, a total of 147 Maoists were killed in 104 gunfights between December 2023 and August, while 723 were taken into custody and 622 gave themselves up. The establishment of forward operating bases (FOBs) in Maoist strongholds has been expedited by the Union government in order to support coordinated intelligence-based operations and enable local authorities to carry out development projects in the isolated communities.

Since December of last year, thirty three FOBs have been established. There are eight in Bijapur, two in Dantewada, four in Narayanpur, one in Kanker, and one in Rajnandgaon. There are also four in Sukma, Chhattisgarh.

Government Reports Show a Notable Decline in Maoist Violence Since 2010

The Maoist violence's geographic distribution has shrunk from 126 districts spread over 10 states in 2013 to 38 districts distributed across nine states in 2024, the administration informed the Parliament in August. It reported that since 2010, there has been a 73% decrease in Maoist violent events.



CONTEXT:- LANDSLIDES IN NAGALAND AND MANY NORTH EASTERN REGIONS

REASON BEHIND LANDSLIDE:-

- 1. Heavy rainfall:-** Due to heavy rainfall soil level saturates and its weight will increase and at last pore water pressure will create which is leading to landslides. Example:-Western Ghats and northeastern part of India.
- 2. Erosion:-** Due to heavy rain soil erosion will be created where from time to time landslides are created. Example:-Many Mountain region of our Country like Shimla,mussoorie,uttarakhand region faces this issue especially on rainy days.
- 3. Mining:-**Due to mining like coal and iron plants will create a landslide issue in our country which will also create environmental issues in our country. Example:-Jharkhand and chhattisgarh region affected by mining issue which created landslide issue in these regions.
- 4. Development works:-**For development work many region occupied by private sectors which created environmental and development issue which we can see in many region of our country. Example:-This development issue we can see in western ghats Region in our country.
- 5. Earthquake and Volcanic eruptions:-**Ground shaking caused by earthquake and volcanic eruption which deposit ash and debris,overloading slopes,often triggering landslides in mountainous areas.
Example:- The 2015 Nepal earthquake triggered numerous landslides across the himalayan region.

IMPACT OF LANDSLIDE

- ❶ Loss of human beings and Infrastructure in our society.
- ❷ It affects agricultural land and damages the agricultural work of local people.
- ❸ Malnutrition and famine conditions also created that area because of landslides.
- ❹ It creates transportation issues and blocks transportation routes.

SOLUTION

- 1. Monitoring:-** First of all develop mapping systems for all that prone area with the help of modern technology.
- 2. Use traditional knowledge:-** Try to use traditional knowledge of local people which help to prevent this type of disastrous issue.
- 3. Policy implementation:-** Local administration should implement policies which create transparency in development work of that prone area and control mining issues and control on private sector for development work.
- 4. Awareness:-** Government should spread awareness programmes through local administration and local panchayat and also use social media for awareness of local people.
- 5. Farming:-** Try to promote terrace farming to reduce landslide risks.
- 6. Education and training:-** Education and training can help ensure the preparedness of the local community.

ILO world Employment and social outlook Report :-

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- 1. Rising inequality:-** Inequality is increasing among youth. It highlights that a large number of the global youth population remains out of employment, education or training.
- 2. Impact on youth:-** Many young people often referred to as not in employment, education, training face barriers in finding jobs.
- 3. Decline in labor share:-** The proportion of total income earned by workers dropped by 0.6 percentage points, continuing a long term downward trend.
- 4. Financial impact:-** Workers income would be 2.4 trillion dollars higher in 2024 where Covid-19 was a major reason.

PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM AND RELATED ISSUES



CONTEXT

- Public distribution system and its impact on the National Food Security Act.
- **Leakage level:** Initially high at 41.7% in 2011-2012 PDS leakages significantly reduced to 22% by 2022-23.
- Causes of leakage include mismatches between the food released by the Food Corporation of India and household purchases recorded by the National Sample Survey. (NSS)
- **About the public distribution system:-** It is related to ensuring food and nutritional security in India, it helped in establishing food prices and making food available for the poor at affordable prices.

ISSUES RELATED TO THE PDS SYSTEM IN INDIA

1. **Identification of beneficiaries:** PDS system corruption also involved where beneficiaries are not getting good grains while those that are ineligible are getting benefit.
2. **Leakage of food grains:-** PDS system suffers from large leakages of food grains during transportation leakages and black marketing by FPS owners.
3. **Procurement issues:-** procurement and storage issue also created because audit by CAG.
4. Environmental issues like Punjab and Haryana under water stress region, deteriorating soil and water conditions from overuse of fertilizers. Example:- As we can see in the northeastern region the water table went down by 33cm per year during 2002-08.

PDS Reforms

Role of Aadhar:- Integrating Aadhar with pds will address the problem of inclusion and exclusion faults.

- 1. Case Study:-**Tamilnadu implements a universal pds system on subsidy.
- 2. Digitisation of Ration cards:-**It allows beneficiary online verification and transparency for their benefit.
- 3. Use of GPS Technology:-**Use of GPS to track the movement of transportation from one place to another place. Example:-Chhatisgarh and Tamilnadu use GPS in transportation to avoid corruption issues.
- 4. SMS-based Monitoring:** allows monitoring by citizens where they are alert by sms system as we can see in Chhatisgarh, Uttar Pradesh, Tamilnadu. **r:-** Integrating Aadhar with pds will address the problem of inclusion and exclusion faults.

Way Forward

1. It can be strengthened through public participation through social audits.
2. It strengthens by increasing the participation of self-help groups and NGOs to ensure transparency of pds system.
3. To use bio-fortified food to enhance nutritional level.
4. To use transparency through technology to prevent leakages and create capacity-building and training Programmes from time to time. Assam Accord Context:-Assam cabinet approves implementation of 57 recommendations of clause 6 panel.

About Assam accord:-

Context:

1. It was signed in 1985 by the central government and Assam government, all Assam Gana Sangram parishad, and all Assam student unions which had the 1979-85 Assam movement against migration from Bangladesh.
2. Implementation of Assam accord department established.
3. The accord set on March 24, 1971, cut off anyone who had come to Assam before this date would be an Indian citizen.
4. As the same cutt date used for the National Register for Citizens (NRC)
5. Clause 6 was a protective provision for Assamese people.

CLAUSE 6 OF ASSAM ACCORDING

1. It talks about constitutional and legislative safeguards for Assamese people.
2. It defines Assamese people and institutes safeguard for them.

Issues involved:-

1. First of all Identification issues about who is under the Assam accord and who is not.
2. There is no mechanism to prove a person has been in Assam before 1951.
3. The definition of Assamese was not clear at till time and many people were not aware of that.

Way forward:-

1. The key social and cultural issue that needs to define about Assamese people.
2. Clause 6 of the Assam Accord also reviews and is clear about their aim.
3. NRC should apply and monitor all regions of states.
4. And preserve their rights with all dimensions.

