



तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय।

लेटिवो 4.0
THE KURUKSHETRA OF DIPLOMACY

LEGATIO 4.0 / STUDY GUIDE SERIES

CCPA

STUDY GUIDE

CCPA

CABINET COMMITTEE ON POLITICAL AFFAIRS

AGENDA / FOCUS

Deliberating upon the implications of illegal immigration, border insecurity, and ethnic instability in Eastern and North-Eastern India.

31 JUL — 02 AUG 2026

DELHI PUBLIC SCHOOL, SILIGURI

THE KURUKSHETRA OF DIPLOMACY

DELEGATE RESEARCH EDITION

LEGATIO 4.0

LEGATIO 4.0

CABINET COMMITTEE ON POLITICAL AFFAIRS

STUDY GUIDE

AGENDA

*Deliberating upon the Implications of Illegal Immigration, Border
Insecurity, and Ethnic Instability in Eastern and North-Eastern India*

Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs · Executive Board

List of Contents

Letter from the Executive Board.....	3
I. Introduction to the Committee.....	4
II. Nature of the Simulation.....	5
III. Background of the Issue.....	6
IV. Border Insecurity.....	8
V. Ethnic Instability.....	9
VI. Legal and Policy Framework.....	10
VII. Key Stakeholders.....	11
VIII. Critical Issues for Discussion.....	12
IX. International and Comparative Dimension.....	13
X. Guidance for Delegates.....	13
XI. Conclusion.....	14
XII. Select Bibliography.....	15

Letter from the Executive Board

Delegates,

Welcome to this simulation of the Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs. This is not a conventional committee. It does not pass resolutions in the manner of the General Assembly or interpret binding text in the manner of the International Court of Justice. It exists to do something narrower and, in a sense, harder: to arrive, in real time and often under political pressure, at a position that the Union Government of India can actually stand behind.

The agenda before you sits at the confluence of three distinct but entangled problems the movement of people across an exceptionally long and porous frontier, the physical and institutional insecurity of that frontier, and the fragile demographic and ethnic equilibrium of a region where questions of who belongs, and since when, have shaped politics for a century. None of these problems can be solved in isolation, and none of them will be solved by slogans. This guide is written to equip you with the legal architecture, the political history, and the live constitutional debates that surround the issue, so that your interventions in committee are grounded rather than merely rhetorical.

You will be expected to speak as a Union Minister or key institutional stakeholder would conscious of your portfolio's institutional interest, alive to the coalition arithmetic of Cabinet government, and capable of negotiating directly and candidly with colleagues who may not share your view. The Executive Board looks forward to a spirited, well-informed, and constitutionally literate deliberation.

Regards,

Shounak Banerjee Chowdhury

I. Introduction to the Committee

The Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs (CCPA) is among the oldest and most consequential of the Cabinet Committees constituted under the Government of India (Transaction of Business) Rules, 1961. Chaired by the Prime Minister, its standing membership typically includes the Ministers of Home Affairs, External Affairs, Defence, Finance, and other senior Cabinet colleagues whose portfolios bear on questions of internal political stability, Centre-State relations, and matters of overarching national importance. It is frequently described in political commentary as the "Super Cabinet" because its remit is not confined to a single sector economic, security, or administrative but extends to the political dimension that cuts across all of them.

The CCPA does not merely advise; its decisions, once taken, function as the settled position of the Union Government on the matter before it, subject to ratification by the full Cabinet only in the most far-reaching cases. It is empowered to consider proposals for major appointments with political sensitivity, Centre-State disputes, communal and regional tension, and any matter that a Minister or the Prime Minister considers of sufficient political weight to be escalated from routine ministerial handling.

Where the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) is seized of matters of defence, internal security operations, and intelligence, and the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) of fiscal and economic policy, the CCPA occupies the space between these the political management of issues that have security, economic, and administrative dimensions but whose core character is the preservation of political stability and the Union's constitutional authority. The agenda before this committee is a paradigmatic CCPA matter for precisely this reason: illegal immigration has a security dimension, border insecurity a defence dimension, and ethnic instability an acute political dimension, but the Committee's task is to weigh all three together and produce a coherent political line.

II. Nature of the Simulation

Delegates must recalibrate their expectations of committee procedure. This is a high-level executive simulation, not a rule-bound parliamentary body. Debate is expected to be dynamic and fluid rather than governed by a rigid speakers' list; direct negotiation across the table, informal huddles, and strategic interruption are not deviations from procedure but the substance of how Cabinet government actually functions. The Chair will exercise moderated discretion to keep deliberation purposeful, but delegates should not expect or seek the structural formality of a General Assembly committee.

Each delegate represents a Union Minister or an equivalent institutional stakeholder, and is expected to argue from that institutional vantage point: the Home Ministry's institutional preoccupation with law and order and Foreigners Act enforcement is not the same as the External Affairs Ministry's preoccupation with the diplomatic costs of unilateral border action, which is again not the same as a state government's electoral exposure on the question. The committee's output is expected to take the form of a Cabinet Note or a set of directives a decision-oriented outcome, not a text modelled on a UN resolution.

III. Background of the Issue

A. Historical Migration Patterns

Cross-border movement of population between Bengal and the eastern districts of undivided India predates Partition, but 1947 and 1971 mark the two decisive ruptures. Partition displaced millions across the new Radcliffe boundary; the Bangladesh Liberation War of 1971 produced a further and much larger influx, with the Government of India recording roughly ten million refugees entering West Bengal, Assam, Tripura, and Meghalaya during the conflict. While the great majority returned after Bangladesh's independence, the episode fixed 1971 in the political and legal imagination of Assam as the relevant demographic watershed a fact that later crystallised into positive law.

B. The Assam Movement and the Assam Accord, 1985

Sustained agitation led by the All Assam Students' Union (AASU) between 1979 and 1985, directed against the alleged inclusion of unauthorised migrants on the state's electoral rolls, culminated in the Assam Accord of 1985. Clause 5 of the Accord fixed 25 March 1971 as the cut-off date: persons who entered Assam before that date would be regularised as citizens, while those who entered on or after that date would be identified as foreigners and rendered liable to detection, deletion from electoral rolls, and deportation in accordance with law. This political settlement was subsequently given statutory form as Section 6A of the Citizenship Act, 1955 a special dispensation applicable to Assam alone.

C. The National Register of Citizens (NRC)

The Supreme Court-monitored updation of the NRC in Assam, conducted through the 2010s and published in its final form in August 2019, sought to operationalise the 1971 cut-off by requiring residents to demonstrate descent from persons present in Assam on or before that date. The exercise excluded approximately 19

lakh applicants from the final list a number that included both suspected foreign nationals and, controversially, a substantial body of persons, including Hindu Bengalis and members of Gorkha and other communities, whose documentary trail could not satisfy the Registrar General's requirements. The political fallout from this outcome, cutting across communal and party lines, has left the NRC's legal and administrative future in Assam unresolved.

D. The Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019

The CAA, 2019 provides an expedited path to Indian citizenship for Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi, and Christian migrants from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan who entered India on or before 31 December 2014, explicitly excluding Muslim migrants from its ambit. The Act provoked a distinctive pattern of opposition in the North-East, where the principal objection was not the religious classification as such but the fear that the Act would override the 1971 cut-off embedded in the Assam Accord and permit the regularisation of migrants who would otherwise have been excluded under Section 6A an anxiety that produced large-scale protest in Assam and Tripura even as the debate elsewhere in India centred on secularism and Article 14.

IV. Border Insecurity

The India–Bangladesh Frontier. At approximately 4,096 kilometres, the India–Bangladesh border is among the longest and, owing to its riverine and char (shifting sandbar) terrain in Assam, West Bengal, and Tripura, one of the most physically difficult to fence or patrol of any frontier India shares. The Border Security Force (BSF) is the lead agency for its management; fencing has been completed along a majority of the land boundary but remains incomplete or repeatedly damaged in riverine stretches, and the movement of the char population itself complicates any purely physical solution.

The India–Myanmar Frontier. The roughly 1,643-kilometre border with Myanmar has historically been governed by a Free Movement Regime (FMR) permitting border residents to travel a limited distance across the boundary without a visa, reflecting long-standing kinship ties between communities on both sides, including the Chin, Kuki, and Naga peoples. Following the 2021 military coup in Myanmar and the ethnic conflict in Manipur from 2023, the Union Government has moved toward fencing the border and has signalled its intention to review or end the FMR a shift with significant humanitarian and diplomatic implications given the cross-border ethnic continuity in the region.

Both frontiers have historically served as conduits for cattle smuggling, narcotics trafficking linked to the wider Golden Triangle network, trafficking in persons, and small-arms movement, and have at various points offered sanctuary to insurgent formations, including factions of the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) and Naga insurgent groups operating from across the Myanmar border.

V. Ethnic Instability

Demographic anxiety in the North-East is not uniform; it takes different local forms. In Assam, the central fault line has historically run between indigenous Assamese and Bodo communities and Bengali-origin Muslim settlers, a tension whose most violent expression remains the Nellie massacre of 1983. In Tripura, decades of in-migration from East Bengal and then Bangladesh produced a demographic inversion in which indigenous tribal communities, once a majority, became a minority in their own state a grievance that fed the tribal insurgencies of the late twentieth century and continues to shape Tripura's politics. In Manipur, the ethnic conflict that erupted in 2023 between the Meitei and Kuki-Zo communities has a distinct etiology rooted in land, tribal status, and hill-valley political representation, but has become entangled with the immigration question because of the ethnic kinship between the Kuki-Zo and Chin refugees fleeing Myanmar, raising a further layer of complexity for any Union policy response.

Institutional protections layered onto this landscape include the Inner Line Permit (ILP) regime, which restricts the entry of outsiders into Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Nagaland, and, since 2019, Manipur, and the Sixth Schedule to the Constitution, which grants a measure of legislative and administrative autonomy to tribal areas in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram precisely in order to protect indigenous land and custom from demographic pressure.

VI. Legal and Policy Framework

A. Statutory Architecture

- Citizenship Act, 1955, and the Citizenship (Registration of Citizens and Issue of National Identity Cards) Rules, 2003 the framework governing citizenship acquisition, the NPR, and, prospectively, a nationwide NRC.
- Foreigners Act, 1946, and the Foreigners Tribunals the ordinary mechanism for the determination of foreigner status outside Assam's special regime.
- Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunals) Act, 1983 enacted for Assam alone, struck down by the Supreme Court in *Sarbananda Sonowal v. Union of India*, (2005) 5 SCC 665, on the ground that its procedural burden on the State made detection and deportation markedly harder than under the ordinary Foreigners Act, thereby failing the Union's obligation under Article 355 to protect Assam against what the Court characterised as external aggression and internal disturbance.
- Section 6A, Citizenship Act, 1955 the statutory embodiment of the Assam Accord's 1971 cut-off, upheld by a four-to-one majority of a Constitution Bench in *In Re: Section 6A of the Citizenship Act, 1955* (2024), which nonetheless left open significant questions about the machinery for its continued implementation.
- The Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, and its 2024 implementing Rules currently the subject of continuing litigation and political contestation regarding their interaction with the Assam Accord.
- The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 applicable in varying degrees across parts of the North-East, with recent partial withdrawals in Assam, Manipur, and Nagaland, and its continued invocation a live question in the border districts.

B. Policy Instruments

Successive Union Governments have pursued border management through fencing, floodlighting, and the deployment of the Border Security Force and Assam Rifles, alongside biometric initiatives such as the NPR and, in Assam, the NRC. The Justice Biplab Kumar Sarma Committee, constituted to give effect to Clause 6 of the Assam Accord protecting Assamese linguistic, cultural, and land rights, submitted its recommendations in 2020; their implementation remains a matter of ongoing negotiation between the Union and the State of Assam.

VII. Key Stakeholders

Stakeholder	Institutional Interest
Ministry of Home Affairs	Lead ministry for internal security, Foreigners Act enforcement, NRC/NPR administration, and Centre-State coordination on law and order.
Ministry of External Affairs	Manages the diplomatic relationship with Bangladesh and Myanmar; wary of unilateral border measures that strain bilateral ties.
Ministry of Defence / Home (Border Forces)	Operational responsibility for BSF and Assam Rifles; fencing, patrolling, and counter-infiltration capability.
Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER)	Development and political management of North-Eastern states; sensitive to indigenous grievance.
State Governments (Assam, Tripura, West Bengal, Manipur)	Divergent electoral incentives and political positions on NRC, CAA, and FMR; direct exposure to local ethnic tension.
Government of Bangladesh	Has historically declined to acknowledge large-scale unauthorised out-migration; repatriation cooperation is diplomatically fraught.
Myanmar (post-coup authorities and opposition)	Instability since 2021 driving refugee flows into Mizoram and Manipur; no single stable interlocutor for repatriation.
Indigenous and Civil Society Bodies (AASU, tribal councils, Sixth Schedule institutions)	Custodians of the demographic and land-rights concerns underlying the Assam Accord and Sixth Schedule protections.
The Judiciary	Supreme Court has an active supervisory role over the NRC exercise and has recently ruled on the constitutionality of Section 6A.

VIII. Critical Issues for Discussion

National Security versus Humanitarian Obligation. India is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol, and manages refugee-like inflows through executive discretion and ad hoc arrangements rather than a codified asylum framework. This leaves considerable room for the Committee to weigh security imperatives against humanitarian considerations without a binding international-law constraint, but also without a settled domestic framework to fall back on.

Federal Tension. Border and citizenship policy sits uneasily between Union competence over citizenship and foreign affairs and the State's competence over public order and its immediate political exposure to the consequences of Union policy a tension the Committee must navigate given the differing positions of the States concerned.

Electoral and Political Sensitivity. Both the NRC and the CAA have been characterised by opposing parties as instruments of electoral advantage, and the Committee's deliberations cannot proceed as though the question were a purely technical or security matter.

Human Rights Concerns. The prospect of large numbers of persons rendered stateless following exclusion from the NRC, and the continued operation of detention centres for declared foreigners, raise concerns that any Cabinet-level directive must address explicitly rather than leave to subordinate administrative discretion.

IX. International and Comparative Dimension

Bangladesh has consistently and publicly declined to accept the premise that its nationals constitute a significant illegal migrant population in India, making bilateral repatriation arrangements politically difficult to negotiate; the Land Boundary Agreement of 2015, which resolved a long-standing enclave dispute, is nonetheless cited as an example of the two governments' capacity to resolve border questions through negotiation rather than unilateral action. Myanmar presents a starker problem: the absence of a stable government since the 2021 coup, combined with the ethnic-kinship dimension of the Chin and Kuki-Zo refugee inflow, means that neither repatriation nor a return to the pre-2021 Free Movement Regime is straightforwardly available to the Committee as a policy option.

X. Guidance for Delegates

Delegates are expected to move beyond their portfolio's institutional reflex and engage candidly with the trade-offs the agenda presents. A Home Ministry delegate arguing purely for fencing and detection without addressing the diplomatic cost to the External Affairs Ministry, or a DoNER delegate raising indigenous grievance without proposing an administratively workable mechanism, will not advance the Committee's deliberation. The Executive Board expects delegates to arrive prepared to negotiate directly, to concede ground where the institutional logic of another Ministry is genuinely stronger, and to work toward a Cabinet Note that is realistic rather than merely aspirational.

Questions for Deliberation

- Should the Union pursue a nationwide NRC modelled on Assam's exercise, and if so, on what cut-off date and evidentiary standard?

- What is the appropriate balance between fencing and diplomatic engagement with Bangladesh on border management?
- Should the Free Movement Regime with Myanmar be suspended, restricted, or retained in its present form, given the ethnic-kinship and humanitarian dimensions of the Chin and Kuki-Zo inflow?
- How should the Union reconcile the CAA's implementation with the 1971 cut-off embedded in the Assam Accord and Section 6A?
- What institutional safeguards are necessary to prevent statelessness among persons excluded from citizenship-verification exercises?

XI. Conclusion

The agenda before this Committee does not admit of a clean or final resolution. It requires holding in view, simultaneously, the security of India's eastern frontier, the constitutional and political commitments embodied in the Assam Accord, the humanitarian reality of instability in Myanmar, and the lived anxiety of indigenous communities across the North-East about their own demographic future. The Executive Board expects a deliberation conducted with the seriousness that these competing claims deserve.

XII. Select Bibliography

Cases

- Sarbananda Sonowal v. Union of India, (2005) 5 SCC 665.
- Assam Sanmilita Mahasangha v. Union of India, (2015) 3 SCC 1 (referral order).
- In Re: Section 6A of the Citizenship Act, 1955, Supreme Court of India (2024).

Legislation and Instruments

- Citizenship Act, 1955, and Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019.
- Foreigners Act, 1946; Illegal Migrants (Determination by Tribunals) Act, 1983 (repealed).
- Assam Accord, 1985.
- Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958.

Reports

- Report of the Committee for Clause 6 of the Assam Accord (Justice Biplab Kumar Sarma Committee, 2020).
- Ministry of Home Affairs, Annual Reports; Border Security Force, Annual Reports; National Crime Records Bureau, Crime in India.