

Final Draft of Updated NRC in Assam

Why in news?

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- The final draft of the updated National Register of Citizens (NRC) in Assam was released recently.

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- Click [here](#) to know more on NRC in Assam

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What are the highlights?

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- The updated National Register of Citizens (NRC) listed 2.89 crore citizens.

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- These were out of the 3.29 crore applicants for inclusion.

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- So there are 40 lakh applicants who were not included in the NRC.

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What is the status of these 40 lakh?

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- Since it's only a draft, it does not necessarily mean that the excluded 40 lakh are not citizens.

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- No one will lose citizenship rights or be sent to a detention camp merely on the basis of the draft NRC.

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- They can file claims and objections at various NRC Seva Kendras during the specified period.

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- The Home Ministry has announced that after these, the final NRC will be

published by December 31, 2018.

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How were they dealt before?

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- Since 1964, the Foreigners Tribunals have identified an estimated 90,000 foreigners in Assam.

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- But many of them are dead and many more are “untraced”.

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- Until recently, around 900 “declared foreigners” and “D-voters” (doubtful voters who could not establish their citizenship) were in the six detention camps.

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- The NRC has put “on hold” 2.48 lakh names in four categories.

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- These are “D-voters” and their descendants, and people whose cases are pending in the tribunals and their descendants.

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- There have been reports about “D-voters” subsequently being declared Indian citizens by the tribunals.

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- But they are being marked “D” all over again in later electoral rolls.

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- To resolve such issues, plans are being made for a centralised database.

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- This will link to real-time information on the status of “suspected foreigners”.

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Who are eligible for further inclusion?

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- The draft includes only those who could establish their linkage to March 24, 1971 or earlier (the cut-off date in the Assam Accord).

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- The excluded 40 lakh would thus have submitted papers that were not

enough to establish this linkage.

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- They now have to back up their claims for inclusion with other eligible proofs.

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- They will have to prove that they or their ancestors were citizens on or before March 24, 1971.

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- Anyone who figured in electoral rolls up to March 24, 1971, or who are descendants of such citizens, are eligible for inclusion.

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- Various other documents are admissible such as birth certificates and land records.

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- But these are valid only as long as these were issued before the cutoff date.

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- The claims-and-objections process will also take into account errors during the update, if any.

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What after the final NRC?

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- Once the final NRC is published, there will still be some out of the register.

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- **Appeal** - They can approach any of the state's 100 Foreigners Tribunals (the quasi-judicial bodies established in 1964).

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- They can also approach the Gauhati High Court and then the Supreme Court.

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- The Assam Border Police can refer any "suspected foreigner" to these tribunals following an inquiry.

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- **Deportation** - If even these legal recourse fails for those excluded, they could be deported.

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- Assam also has six detention camps for illegal migrants within existing jails, and proposes to build a seventh.
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- These cannot, however, be expected to accommodate all the exclusions, which could finally run into lakhs.
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- Also, Bangladesh has never officially acknowledged that any of its citizens migrated illegally to Assam.
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- **Stateless** - So if not deported or detained in a camp, they would officially remain to be non-citizens.
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- But what happens to these non-citizens remains a grey area as India has no fixed policy for “stateless” persons.
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- The only aspect that is more or less clear is that a “stateless” person will not have voting rights.
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- The Centre may consider formulating a policy for the “stateless”, after the final NRC.
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- He or she may, however, be provided certain facilities on “humanitarian grounds”.
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- There have also been suggestions in Assam that they be given work permits.
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Source: Indian Express

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