

## New SOP for those left out

Applicants left out of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) may be given a personal hearing under a fresh Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) being devised by the Home Ministry.

The Registrar-General of India (RGI) and the Home Ministry are exploring several options to provide adequate opportunity to 40 lakh of the 3.9 crore applicants whose names were not included in the final NRC draft published on July 30.

### Ensuring credibility

RGI Sailesh told *The Hindu* that the SOP would ensure that filing claims and objections was a fair and credible process. "There may be many applicants who may not understand the process and the required documentation. So we have to see that every person has the right information and the assistance required," he said.

An official said the circle officers or block development officers would be asked to give personal hearings to applicants even after they had exhausted the option of filing "claims and objections".

On July 31, a Supreme Court Bench had ordered the government to frame, in consultation with State NRC Coordinator Prateek Hajela, a "fair" SOP to deal with the claims and objections of those who did not find their names in the draft NRC.

"The SoP will also go into the aspects of disposal of claims and objections," Mr. Sailesh said, "so that reasonable time and adequate opportunity are given to applicants. The rules say that any person can make an objection against an inclusion and any person whose name is not there can file a claim."

Asked if it would be appropriate to call the 40 lakh applicants "infiltrators", as they were being referred to by some political leaders, Mr. Sailesh said: "We don't have any nomenclature for them. We have the list of eligible people for inclusion in NRC and the total [number of] applicants in NRC. For us they are applicants." The Home Ministry had earlier told the Assam government that no action should be initiated by the administration or the police based on the draft NRC. The RGI has been asked to use all means of communication, including websites, toll-free numbers and SMS, to provide information to the public about the draft NRC.

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