

CENTRE OKAYS CITIZENSHIP BILL

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The Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) on the contentious Citizenship Amendment Bill, 2016 recommended that the Assam government should help settle migrants “especially in places which are not densely populated, thus, causing lesser impact on the demographic changes and providing succour to the indigenous Assamese people”.

The Bill paves the way to grant citizenship to six religious minorities — Hindus, Jains, Sikhs, Parsis, Christians and Buddhists — from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh who came to India before 2014.

Strong resistance

There has been a strong resistance to the Bill in the BJP-ruled Assam as it would pave the way for giving citizenship, mostly to illegal Hindu migrants from Bangladesh, in Assam who came after March 1971, in violation of the Assam Accord of 1985.

The Union Cabinet cleared the redrafted Citizenship Amendment Bill on Monday, and it is likely to be tabled in Parliament on Tuesday. The Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) expressed its concern before the committee.

“Our only concern has been that the agencies who are inimical to us should not have a legal framework within which they can exploit our situation and infiltrate their own people into our own country. That is a matter of great concern for us,” the report quoted a RAW representative as saying.

The committee headed by Rajendra Agarwal of the BJP appreciated the government’s decision, claiming such people were being subjected to “unfair treatment” in those countries and submitted the 440-page report in the Lok Sabha on Monday.

Dissent notes defeated

The dissent notes given by some parliamentarians were defeated.

“As a matter of fact, protecting the interest of the indigenous Assamese people is the responsibility of both the Central government and the State government of Assam. The resettlement packages and compensation to the State governments, as provided by the Central government for accommodating the migrants should motivate and encourage the State government to help settle such migrants especially in places which are not densely populated, thus, causing lesser impact on the demographic changes and providing succour to the indigenous Assamese people,” the report tabled in the Lok Sabha said.

‘Religious persecution’

Asked by the committee about the mechanism to establish religious persecution in a foreign land, the Home Ministry replied, “Inputs from security agencies along with other corroborative evidence in the print/electronic media would help to establish religious persecution in a foreign land.”

The committee rejected the amendment to exclude Bangladesh from the list of benefactor countries.

The Director of Intelligence Bureau suggested that after the Bill was passed, one more round of verification should be done for the applicants.

END

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