CAA IS A BENIGN PIECE OF LEGISLATION, HOME MINISTRY TELLS SC

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The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) is a "benign piece of legislation" which seeks to provide a relaxation, in the nature of an amnesty, to specific communities from specified countries with a clear cut-off date, the Home Ministry told the Supreme Court on Sunday.

The Act fast-tracks citizenship-by-naturalisation process for "illegal migrants" from six religious communities, other than Muslims, who have fled persecution from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan. The court had fixed the hearing on 220 petitions challenging the CAA of 2019 on October 31.

The government said "the CAA is a specific amendment which seeks to tackle a specific problem, i.e., the persecution on the ground of religion in the light of the undisputable theocratic constitutional position in these countries, the systematic functioning of these States and the perception of fear that may be prevalent amongst minorities as per the de facto situation".

Parliament, in its competence, has passed the law taking into consideration the acknowledged class of minorities in three countries. It said the plight of these classified communities had been attracting the attention of successive governments.

"But no government took any legislative measure and merely acknowledged the problem and took some administrative action through executive instructions regarding entry, stay and citizenship issues of these communities," it said.

The CAA, the government said, was a "narrowly tailored legislation" seeking to address the problem which awaited India's attention for a solution since several decades.

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