

## Chakmas to be made citizens

Pema Khandu

As the Union government remains undecided on the procedure to deport the Rohingya, it is all set to give citizenship to over one lakh Chakma-Hajongs, Buddhists and Hindus who fled to India in the 1960s to escape religious persecution in the Chittagong Hill area of Bangladesh (undivided Pakistan then).

Home Minister Rajnath Singh will chair a meeting on Wednesday where a final decision to grant citizenship to the Chakma-Hajongs will be taken.

Arunachal Pradesh Chief Minister Pema Khandu will be present at the meeting.

A senior Home Ministry official said they would be granted citizenship but will not have any land ownership rights in Arunachal Pradesh, a predominantly tribal State. The Arunachalis have opposed giving any rights to Chakma-Hajongs.

"They would be free to buy land anywhere else in India but not in Arunachal Pradesh. They could continue to live in the transit camps where they have been housed since 1964-65," the official said.

### Rajnath's view

On Tuesday, while responding to a question regarding deportation of Rohingya, Mr. Singh told a press conference in Jammu, "We have plans for illegal immigrants and some action will be taken soon." "They are illegal immigrants and we are not ruling out the possibility of a security threat. Wait and watch," he added.

The Home Ministry official said they were yet to formalise a procedure for deportation.

"Any procedure on deportation of Rohingya will be an extrapolation of the existing policy on Bangladesh. First step is to identify them as most of them claim they are Indians. The number of Rohingya living in India is an estimate by the intelligence agencies," said the official.

The official said identifying an undocumented citizen was a long process.

"The police will have to enquire if the person is not an Indian citizen. Then he or she will be declared a foreigner. A foreigner not having a document is an illegal immigrant. A communication will be sent to Myanmar to verify their address. Deporting them will be the last step and the process has not been finalised yet," he said.

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