



Language matters

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Highlights

- The process of filing claims and objections by persons left out of the draft National Register of Citizens in Assam began, in an atmosphere fraught with uncertainty about the documentation needed and possible recourse for those who may ultimately not clear the final list. In the draft published on July 30, as many as 40 lakh of the 3.29 crore applicants found their names missing.
- It is vital that the state do all it can to create an enabling environment to assist people grappling with paperwork and bureaucracy to assert their claim to being legitimate citizens of India.
- It is equally important that the government, in Assam and at the Centre, think the future through humanely and practically in regard to those who may remain off the final list.
- Leaders of the Bharatiya Janata Party, which is also in power in Assam, are freely recommending NRCs across India, and using the process in Assam to create new fault lines.
- This weekend, at a public meeting in Delhi, the BJP president, Amit Shah, rallied the crowd by referring to infiltrators allegedly in the country, claiming they were eating away at India's future.
- This has already drawn a response from Bangladesh, with Minister of Information Hasanul Haq Inu calling Mr. Shah's comments "unwanted", and also reiterating Bangladesh's position that the NRC exercise is India's internal matter.
- Beyond the data and diplomacy angles, there must be concern about the language being employed.
- Analogies to pests that attack a society from within are the staple of dangerous polarising rhetoric.
- The use of the NRC in electoral rhetoric is even more dangerous.
- Regrettably, the BJP seems determined to proceed with such mobilisation, knowing full well the damage it will cause to Indian society.