



# SC questions Assam govt. over untraced foreign immigrants

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## **'Where are those who have not been deported and are not in detention centres?'**

- The Supreme Court questioned the Assam government's efforts to trace over 70,000 illegal immigrants, who have already mixed with the local population in the State.
- A Ministry of Home Affairs affidavit shows that 91,609 persons were declared 'illegal foreigners' by the Foreigners Tribunals in Assam till March 2018.
- A Bench of Chief Justice of India Ranjan Gogoi said there might even be "undeclared foreigners" who had succeeded in "merging with the local population" in the State.
- The Home Ministry explained that persons declared 'illegal foreigners' by the tribunals either abscond immediately or are already untraceable.

## **Many obstacles**

- The hearing saw the court criticise the policy of "pushing back" illegal foreigners to Bangladesh without enquiring about their country of origin.
- This was in the backdrop of the Home Ministry spelling out obstacles in the nationality verification process for illegal foreigners.

## **Wrong information**

- Though as a sovereign nation, India has the absolute right to deport illegal immigrants, it cannot do so randomly, the affidavit said, agreeing with the court's point of view.
- The "push-back" policy was dropped in 2013, and now diplomatic channels were employed to determine the nationality of an illegal

foreigner and deport the person.

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