



The spectre of deportation

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The spectre of deportation-The outcome of the NRC exercise has implications for India's ties with Bangladesh

- The last date for filing claims and objections for Assam's National Register of Citizens (NRC) has been extended by the Supreme Court to December 31, from December 15.
- This exercise of compiling the NRC in the first place has sparked a debate around its political, economic and humanitarian consequences, and its implications for India's relationship with its neighbours, particularly Bangladesh.

Two-way traffic

- Few seem to realise that there are legal as well as illegal Indian immigrants in Bangladesh too.
- According to the latest available Bangladesh government estimates of 2009, more than 500,000 Indians were working in Bangladesh.
- More recently, Bangladesh was reported to be among the highest source of remittances to India, behind the United Arab Emirates, the U.S., Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the U.K.
- Many Indian citizens are securing coveted employment opportunities in Bangladesh through multinational companies, non-governmental organisations, and trading activities.
- To put things into perspective, most of them are employed in advantageous jobs in Bangladesh while Bangladeshis in India are largely employed in low-paying jobs.
- The ruling establishment in India maintains that the NRC is an administrative task overseen by the Supreme Court, and not a political gambit.
- However, some members of the ruling party have been making hateful anti-migration and anti-Bangladeshi comments that reflect poorly on the prevalent positive relationship between Bangladesh and India.

Neighbourhood first?

- Prime Minister Mr. Modi came to power with proclamation of a 'Neighbourhood First' policy.
- Midway in the final year of his term, the reality speaks quite differently.
- The India-Bhutan relationship has also been strained ever since India temporarily withdrew subsidies on cooking gas and kerosene in 2013, constraining bilateral ties.
- The India-China power play has also cast its shadow over Sri Lanka and the Maldives in the last few years.
- Against this backdrop of China making inroads into South Asia and India's backyard, Bangladesh has so far been the most trusted ally of India.
- However, the Teesta water-sharing issue remains unaddressed, non-tariff barriers on

Bangladeshi exports persist and border killings are yet to become a thing of the past.

- The NRC issue threatens to disturb the equilibrium in India-Bangladesh ties.
- Plans for deportation of those not on the NRC list are not only politically imprudent but also risk inciting unrest across the region.
- Previous similar exercises have not been effective and only resulted in alienating individuals from their natural rights.

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