Identity Certificates to Refugees

Why in news?

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- The issue of ‘identity certificates’ to West Pakistan refugees in Jammu and Kashmir is threatening to divide the state on regional and religious lines.
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What is identity certificates?

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- An **identity certificate** is sometimes called an alien's passport, is a travel document issued by a country to non-citizens (also called aliens) residing within their borders who are stateless persons or otherwise unable to obtain a passport from their state of nationality (also called refugees).
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Whom they want to give identity certificates?

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- The government of India and state government of Jammu and Kashmir wants to issue identity certificates to West Paksitan refugees in Jammu and Kashmir.
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What is the response in the state of Jammu and Kashmir regarding identity certificates issue?

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- The protests have erupted in the Kashmir Valley, with separatists and the mainstream opposition accusing the PDP-BJP coalition government of trying

to dilute state subject laws by giving the certificates to the refugees.
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- The leaders in Jammu have raised the settlement of Rohingya Muslims in the region in return, calling it an attempt to change its demography.
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Why government want to issue identity certificates to refugees of West Pakistan?

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- The government has defended the identity certificates saying the West Pakistan refugees, almost all Hindus, who came to J&K at the time of Partition, continue to be “non-state subjects”.
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- They are only issuing them identity certificates so as to help them get jobs in paramilitary forces and other central government establishments as citizens of India.
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What is the reponse of the political parties in Jammu and Kashmir?

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- The National Conference described the issue of certificates to the refugees as a “first step” towards getting them permanent resident status and property rights in the state.
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- In Jammu, BJP leaders said they would raise the issue of the “increasing number” of Rohingya Muslim refugees in the state in the coming Budget Session of the Assembly.
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- There are no records regarding them, and their settlement in a sensitive border state is a great threat to national security as these people can be easily used by anti-national elements.
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- Without naming the Rohingya Muslims, they called the presence of **“foreigners”** in the city and its outskirts a “sinister campaign” to change the demography of the area by “unseen forces”.
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Who are the Rohingya Muslim refugees?

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- Rohingya Muslims who belongs to Myanmar have denied citizenship rights and are persecuted by state sponsored Bhuddist radicals of Myanmar during last few years.
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- Muslim refugees from Myanmar have been coming to Jammu for the past several years. They are neither citizens of India, nor permanent residents of the state.
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Who are the West Pakistan refugees?

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- The West Pakistan refugees, originally 5,764 families settled in areas along the international border, have now grown to nearly 20,000 families and spread out in Jammu, Samba and Kathua districts.
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- Of these only 20 families are Muslims, according to West Pakistani refugees report.
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- With their fourth-fifth generation now living in Jammu and around, they are Indian citizens, but not permanent residents of J&K in view of the state's special status under the Constitution.
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- As such, neither can they own property in the state nor can their children get the state quota for admission to professional colleges or in jobs.
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- They vote in the Lok Sabha elections, but cannot do so in the Assembly polls.
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Who can issue the identity certificates?

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- The state subject certificates issued to permanent residents of the state as defined in the constitution of Jammu and Kashmir and the powers to issue it are vested in the district magistrate of the state.

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