Rohingyas - The Cry for Citizenship

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Why in news?

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As the humanitarian crisis in Myanmar's Rakhine Province has been worsening, the citizenship status of Rohingyas calls for a closer look.

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What are legal provisions that render them stateless?

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- Under Myanmar's discriminatory 1982 citizenship law, only those who trace their residence in the country to before 1823.
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- Although Rohingyas have a history dating as early as the 15th century, Official records mark their entry only in 1826.
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- A list of 135 ethnic groups who could claim citizenship was published by the government in 1990 and that too did not include the Rohingyas.
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How has the plight of the stateless Rohingyas fared thus far?

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- The "Rangoon University Rohingya Students Association" was among the many ethnic student associations that functioned in the mid 20th century.
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- Even after the military takeover in 1962, the Rohingyas continued to live with the status quo of statelessness but without the fear of prosecution.
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- They voted in every election from 1948 until 2010, each time after being

issued “temporary scrutiny cards”.
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- The authorities also promised twice in the 2008 constitution referendum and 2010 election that a permanent National Scrutiny Card will soon be issued to all the Rohingyas.
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- In the 2010, the military even sent three Rohingya MPs to Parliament.
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- Sadly, in the 2015 election that was touted as the first full democratic election in Myanmar since 1962, the Rohingya were disenfranchised.
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What has been the recent positive developments?

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- The Myanmar government appointed “Advisory Commission on Rakhine State” submitted its report recently.
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- The Commission, has strongly recommended a review of the 1982 citizenship laws and specifically pointed to the slow and sporadic process of citizenship verification, which has covered only 10,000 Rohingya since 2014.
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- Ms.Suu Kyi’s office has welcomed the report’s recommendations and added that it would have a positive impact on the process of reconciliation and development.
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- The powerful military has however rejected the report.
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Source: Indian Express

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