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Peace pact signed with 8 tribal militant groups of Assam

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What's in News?

The Centre and Assam Government signed a **tripartite agreement with eight armed tribal groups in Assam** to bring them into the mainstream and give them political and economic rights.

News Highlights:

The groups comprising of 1,182 people that signed the agreement are Birsa Commando Force (BCF), Adivasi People's Army (APA), All Adivasi National Liberation Army (AANLA), Adivasi Cobra Military of Assam (ACMA) and Santhali Tiger Force (STF).

The remaining three outfits are splinter groups of BCF, AANLA, and ACMA.

In 2016, all these groups signed a ceasefire agreement with the Centre

But could not achieve a permanent solution to the issue

The tripartite agreement with the adivasi groups is latest in the series of peace accords signed by the Centre and relevant state governments since 2014 with different insurgent groups in the northeast region, starting with the settlement with NLFT(SD) in 2019, the Bru-Reang agreement and Bodo accord in 2020, Karbi Anglong pact in 2021 and the Assam-Meghalaya inter-state boundary agreement in March 2022

As per the Minister of Home Affairs, the number of insurgency-related incidents in the northeast had decreased from 824 in 2014 to 158.

More than 10,000 cadres had surrendered and joined the mainstream after 2014 and more than 7,000 weapons had been surrendered.

Terms of the Agreement:

The armed adivasi cadres will give up violence, follow the rule of law and join the peaceful democratic process.

The Centre and Assam government, in return,

- a) will fulfil the adivasi groups' political, economic and educational aspirations;
- b) protect, preserve and promote their social, cultural, linguistic and ethnic identity;
- c) ensure focused and rapid development of tea gardens and adivasi villages of Assam;
- d) establish an adivasi welfare and development council;

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e)rehabilitate armed cadres and ensure welfare of tea garden workers; and

f)provide a Rs 1,000-crore special development package for infrastructure upgrade in adivasi villages.

Concerns:

The peace agreement allegedly failed to address the primary demand of a schedule tribes (ST) status to the Adivasi community living in Assam.

In Assam, six communities including tea tribes have been demanding ST status for years and the government.

Tea Tribes:

Originally from the **Chota Nagpur plateau in eastern India** as well as in present-day **Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh**, these community people were first brought to the state by British for tea cultivation in the early 1820s.

Constituting about 20% of the over 3.5 crore population of the state, the 11 lakh-strong workforce of tea communities in Assam play a significant role not only in the economy but also in elections in north and upper Assam.

They are known as **Tea and Ex-Tea Garden Tribes**, who are recognized as **Other Backward Classes by the Government**.

Disturbed areas:

The disturbed areas under the **Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA)** had been reduced from a large part of the northeast.

About 60% of Assam is now free from the AFSPA.

In Manipur, 15 police stations in six districts were taken out of the periphery of the disturbed area.

In Arunachal Pradesh, the AFSPA remains in only three districts and two police stations in one district.

In Nagaland, the disturbed area notification was removed from 15 police stations in seven districts and in Tripura and Meghalaya, the AFSPA was withdrawn completely

Conclusion:

This is an important milestone in the direction of making north-east extremism -free by 2025

Only the final accord with Dimas remains, once that is done, Assam will be fully insurgency-free and peaceful