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Register of Indigenous Inhabitants of Nagaland

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Why in News

Recently, an apex body of Naga tribes, **Naga Hoho** has cautioned the Nagaland Government with respect to preparation of the **Register of Indigenous Inhabitants of Nagaland (RIIN)**, seen as a variant of Assam's National Register of Citizens.

Citizen check

A look at some key statistics of Nagaland, which is setting up a register of indigenous inhabitants

Population*: **1,988,636**

No. of tribal and non-tribal communities: **25**

Population of 16 recognised tribes: **90%**

Unlike other States, Nagaland's decadal population dropped by **0.47%** between 2001 and 2011

Decadal growth in the 1980s: **56%**

Decadal growth in the 1990s: **65%**

* Census 2011

A Konyak Naga tribesman in traditional attire



Key Points

- **Background:**
 - The State government had formed a **three-member Committee** in 2019 for **studying, examining, and recommending the implementation of RIIN.**
 - **Functions of RIIN Committee was to determine:**
 - The eligibility criteria to be an indigenous inhabitant.
 - Authority to authenticate claims of being indigenous.
 - Place of registration as indigenous inhabitant.
 - The basis of claims of being indigenous.
 - The nature of documents that will be acceptable as proof of being indigenous.
 - However, the **exercise was suspended following protests** from community-based and extremist organisations.
 - Since then the Nagaland government has been trying to **revive the RIIN exercise that was launched in July 2019** with the objective of **preventing outsiders from obtaining fake indigenous certificates** for seeking jobs and benefits of government schemes.
- **Register of Indigenous Inhabitants of Nagaland:**
 - The RIIN will be **prepared after an extensive survey with the help of a village-wise and ward-wise list of indigenous inhabitants based on official records.** Also, It will be prepared under the supervision of each district administration.
 - **No fresh indigenous inhabitant certificate will be issued after the RIIN is completed** except for children born to the State's indigenous inhabitants who will be issued indigenous certificates along with birth certificates. The RIIN database will be updated accordingly.
 - The RIIN will also be **integrated with the online system for Inner-Line Permit**, a temporary document non-inhabitants are required to possess for entry into and travel in Nagaland.
 - The entire exercise will be **monitored by the Commissioner of Nagaland.** In addition, the state government will designate nodal officers of the rank of a Secretary to the state government.

- **Naga's Concern:**

- **Exclusion of Nagas:**

If RIIN implemented the identification process with **1st December, 1963** (the day Nagaland attained statehood) as the cut-off date for determining the permanent residents of the State, it is likely to **exclude Nagas who have come from beyond the boundaries of Nagaland.**

- **Loss of Property:**

- Naga tribes living in Assam, Manipur and Arunachal Pradesh in India and in Myanmar have a legitimate claim to their **ancestral homeland.**
- There are thousands of Nagas who have bought lands, built houses and settled down in Nagaland for several decades.
- In the absence of records such as land pattas, house taxes paid or enrolment in electoral rolls prior to **1st December, 1963** many procedural anomalies will crop up even within the so-called pure Nagas of Nagaland.

- **Can Be treated as Illegal:**

The non-indigenous Nagas could be treated as “illegal immigrants” and their lands and property confiscated. **The idea of the Nagas as a people to live together and their aspiration to live with self-determination will be irreparably damaged.**

Nagas

- Nagas are a **hill people who are estimated to number about 2.5 million (1.8 million in Nagaland, 0.6 million in Manipur and 0.1 million in Arunachal states)** and living in the remote and mountainous country between the Indian state of Assam and Burma.

There are also Naga groups in Myanmar.

- The Nagas are not a single tribe, but an **ethnic community that comprises several tribes** who live in the state of Nagaland and its neighbourhood.
- Nagas belong to the **Indo-Mongoloid Family.**
- There are **nineteen major Naga tribes**, namely, Aos, Angamis, Changs, Chakesang, Kabuis, Kacharis, Khain-Mangas, Konyaks, Kukis, Lothas (Lothas), Maos, Mikirs, Phoms, Rengmas, Sangtams, Semas, Tankhuls, Yamchumgar and Zeeliang.

Way Forward

- In an already volatile region where the **Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act 1958** is routinely extended, it is **best that Nagaland proceeds with caution in this enterprise.** The RIIN should not ultimately become a vehicle to make **outsiders of insiders.**

- The NRC experiment in Assam witnessed extremely divisive political posturing. Other Northeastern states are sure to be watching with keen interest what is unfolding in Assam and Nagaland. **Emotive political issues cannot be allowed to drive the compiling of a registry of citizens.**

Source:TH