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Rengma Nagas Demand Autonomous District Council

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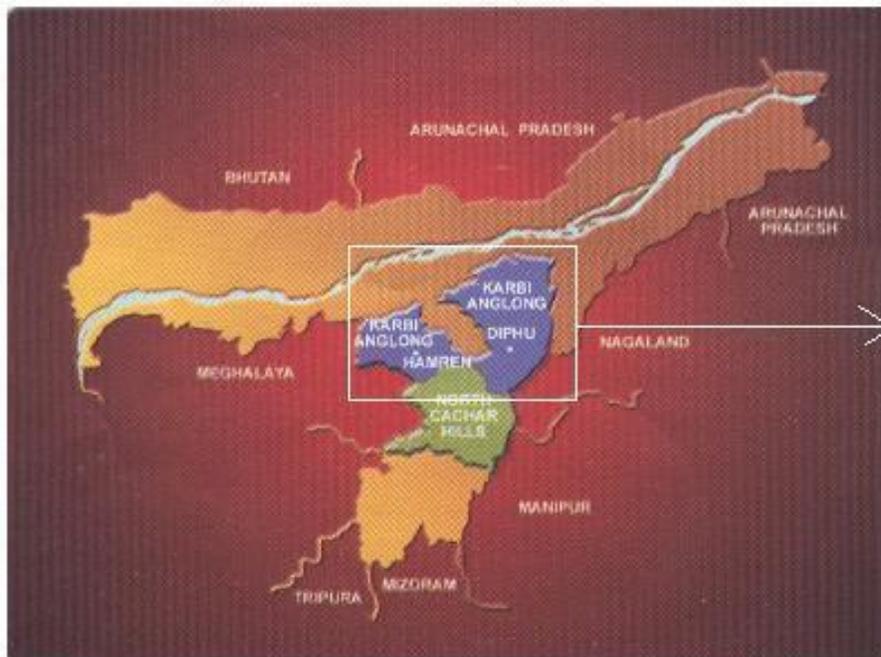
Why in News

The Rengma Naga Peoples' Council (RNPC) or **Rengma Nagas** have **demand an Autonomous District Council (ADC)** in Assam.

- The Central and the State governments recently upgraded the **Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC)** and the **North Cachar Hills Autonomous Council (NCHAC)** to territorial councils like the **Bodoland Territorial Council**.

The '**status of territorial council**' will provide **more autonomy and financial grant** to them.

- It is alleged that the creation of these tribal councils deprived the Rengma Nagas, the "legitimate owners", of the land. Both the **KAAC** and the **NCHAC share boundaries with Nagaland**.



Key Points

- **About the Rengma Naga Tribe:**

- **Found in:**

- Rengma is a **Naga tribe** found in **Nagaland, Assam** and **Arunachal Pradesh**.

- **History:**

- The **first official recording of the Rengma Nagas staying in Assam's Karbi Hills (then known as Mikir Hills)** was made in 1855 by Major John Butler, a British officer posted in the Northeastern region.
 - Butler recorded that the **Rengmas in Karbi Anglong had migrated there from the Naga Hills in the early part of the 18th century**, abandoned many of their tribal customs and married within the local communities.

- **Festival:** The harvest festival of the Rengmas is called **Ngada**.

- **Autonomous District Council (ADC):**

- **About:**

- The **Sixth Schedule** of the Constitution deals with the administration of the **tribal areas** in the four northeastern states of **Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram**.

The special provision is **provided under Article 244 (2) and Article 275** of the Constitution.

- The tribals have been given freedom to exercise legislative and executive powers through an **autonomous regional council and ADCs**.

- **Composition of Autonomous Councils:**

- Each autonomous district and regional council **consists of not more than 30 members**, of which four are nominated by the governor and the rest via elections. All of them **remain in power for a term of five years**.
- However, the **Bodoland Territorial Council is an exception** as it can **constitute up to 46 members**.

- **Governor's Control:**

- Despite various degrees of autonomy, the 6th Schedule area **does not fall outside the executive authority of the state concerned**.
- The **governor is empowered to organise and re-organise** the autonomous districts.

- **Applicability of Central and State Laws:**

The **Acts passed by Parliament** and **state legislatures** may or may not be levied in these regions unless the **President and the governor gives her or his approval**, with or without modifications in the laws for the autonomous regions.

- **Civil and Criminal Judicial Powers:** The Councils have also been endowed with wide civil and criminal judicial powers, for example **establishing village courts** etc.

However, the jurisdiction of these councils is subject to the jurisdiction of the concerned High Court.

- **Existing Autonomous Councils:** The sixth schedule to the Constitution includes **10 autonomous district councils in 4 states**. These are:

- **Assam:** Bodoland Territorial Council, Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council and North Cachar Hills/Dima Hasao Autonomous Council.
- **Meghalaya:** Garo Hills Autonomous District Council, Jaintia Hills Autonomous District Council and Khasi Hills Autonomous District Council.
- **Tripura:** Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council.
- **Mizoram:** Chakma Autonomous District Council, Lai Autonomous District Council, Mara Autonomous District Council.

- **Arguments of Rengma Naga Peoples' Council (RNPC):**

- **Rengmas were the first tribal people in Assam to have encountered the British in 1839.**

But the existing **Rengma Hills** was eliminated from the political map of the State and replaced with that of **Mikir Hills (now Karbi Anglong)** in **1951**.

- The Rengmas gave shelter to the **Ahom** refugees during the Burmese invasions of Assam in 1816 and 1819.

The **Ahom** are an ethnic group from the Indian states of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh.

- The **Rengma Hills and Mikir Hills** were **two separate entities until 1951**. The **Rengma Hills** was partitioned in **1963** between Assam and Nagaland.

- Karbis have no history in the Rengma Hills.
- At the time of creation of Nagaland State, the **Karbis were known as Mikirs till 1976**.

They were the **indigeneous tribal people of Mikir Hills**.

- The **Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC)** population is around 12 lakh and the Karbis constitute only 3 lakh, the remaining are non-Karbhis, including the Rengma Nagas, whose population is around 22,000.

- **NSCN (I-M) Stand:**

- The **National Socialist Council of Nagaland or NSCN (Isak-Muivah)** has said that the Rengma issue was one of the important agendas of the “**Indo-Naga political talks**” and no authority should go far enough to override their interests.
- NSCN (IM) had signed a Naga Peace Accord with the Government of India in August 2015, but the final accord is yet to be finalised.

One of the most contentious demands of the NSCN (IM) was the **creation of a unified Naga homeland, called ‘Greater Nagalim’** by integrating the Naga-inhabited areas of Assam, Manipur and Arunachal with Nagaland.

Source: TH