



Upheaval In Meghalaya

Why in News

Recently, a former militant of the **Hynniewtrep National Liberation Council (HNLC)**, was killed in a police encounter that has led to a crisis in Meghalaya.

- The encounter was reportedly carried out by the police team of **East Khasi Hills and East Jaintia Hills**.



Key Points

- **Background:**
 - Meghalaya shares a border with Bangladesh and has seen **decades of migration from the neighbouring country** as well as from **other parts of India - Bengal, Punjab and Bihar**.
 - This has **sparked anxieties of indigenous communities who feared becoming a "minority in their own homeland"** because of the influx of "outsiders".
 - It was a **culmination of these "anti-outsider sentiments" that led to the formation of Meghalaya's first militant group, the Hynniewtrep Achik Liberation Council (HALP), in 1992.**
 - Hynniewtrep represented the Khasi and Jaintia communities and Achik represented

the Garo community.

- HALC was later divided and **HNLC** came into being that represented the **Khasi and Jaintia communities** and the **Achik Matgrik Liberation Army that represented the Garo community**.

- The Achik Matgrik Liberation Army was later replaced by the **Achik National Volunteers Council (ANVC)**.

- HNLC claimed to represent only the interest of Khasi Communities, whereas, **the Achik Matgrik Liberation Army** demanded a **separate state for the Garo community**.

▪ **Present Status of militancy in Meghalaya:**

- The **ANVC** since 2004 has been under an **extended ceasefire agreement with the government** while the **HNLC has been trying to talk peace** with the government but on a conditional basis.
- Over the last several years, militancy in Meghalaya was seen as declining.

- In 2018, the Centre withdrew the [Armed Forces Special Powers Act \(AFSPA\)](#) from Meghalaya after almost 27 years of witnessing a **decline by 80% in insurgency-related incidents**.

▪ **Insurgencies in other North East states:**

- **Nagaland:** [Naga Insurgency](#)
- **Mizoram:** [Mizo Movement](#).
- **Assam Insurgency: United Liberation Front of Assam (U.L.F.A.)** was formed in 1979 for the deportation of illegal migrants.

- [Bodoland Statehood Movement](#).

- **Manipur: United National Liberation Front** formed in 1964, with an objective of ending the discrimination against [Manipur](#).
- **Arunachal Pradesh:** The only case of indigenous insurgency movement in Arunachal Pradesh was the rise of the **Arunachal Dragon Force (ADF)**, which was rechristened as **East India Liberation Front (EALF) in 2001**.

▪ **Implications:**

◦ **Fatalities:**

- Severe fatalities have been reported from the northeast including both civilians and security forces.

◦ **Hindrance in India's NE Economic Policies:**

- In the **oil-rich Assam, militants have periodically targeted oil and gas pipelines for sabotage**, alleging that India is exploiting the natural resources of the state.
- National projects have either been stalled or have moved with a tardy pace after militants attacks. **Tourism**, which could have flourished in the scenic northeast, has **suffered** a lot due to instability in the region.

◦ **Hampers India's Act East policy.**

- Militancy has also stalled the prospect of **linking the economy of the northeast with the neighbouring Southeast Asian countries**

◦ **Resistance in Education:**

- The education sector too has been affected by militancy. **A number of schools in states like Tripura's interior areas have been shut** as teachers avoid the areas due to fear of militant strikes.

▪ **Measures to Counter Insurgency:**

◦ **Operations and special acts:**

- In the Assam 1990s, two military operations, **Operation Rhino and Bajrang, were launched against U.L.F.A. militants.**
- Special powers under **AFSPA (Armed Forces Special Powers Act)** were bestowed on armed forces to deal with emergency conditions. It is there in the whole of **Assam, Nagaland, most of Manipur, and some areas of Arunachal Pradesh.**
- **Peace Talks:**
 - Today, **almost all the major insurgent groups in the region**, except the Meitei insurgents, have entered into a **ceasefire or Suspension of Operation (SoO) agreements** with the Union and/or state governments.
 - They are **engaged in peace talks** with some even disbanding their armed cadres.
- **Inner Line Permit (ILP):**
 - **Restrictions are imposed on the entry of outsiders** to maintain the original identity of indigenous people of Mizoram, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh entry of outsiders are not allowed without ILP.
- **Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (DoNER):**
 - It is responsible for the matters relating to the planning, execution and monitoring of development schemes and projects in the North Eastern Region, to accelerate the pace of socio-economic development of the region.

Khasi Community

- Khasi people are an **indigenous ethnic group of Meghalaya** in north-eastern India. They **have a distinctive culture** and are **the largest tribe** of Meghalaya.
 - Both **inheritance of property and succession to tribal office run through the female line**, passing from the mother to the youngest daughter.
- The Khāsi speak a **Mon-Khmer language of the Austroasiatic stock.**
- They are **divided into several clans.** Wet rice (paddy) provides the main subsistence; it is cultivated in the valley bottoms and in terrace gardens built on the hillsides.

Garo Community

- The Garos, who call themselves A'chiks, are **the second largest tribe in Meghalaya.**
- The Garos have a **strong tradition that they have come from Tibet.** They have a **number of dialects and cultural groups.** Each of them originally settled at a particular area of the Garo Hills and outlying plain lands.
- However, **the culture of the modern Garo community has been greatly influenced by Christianity.** Nokpantes are the glory of the past and all children are given equal care, rights and importance by the modern parents.
- The Garo marriage is regulated by **two important laws, viz., Exogamy and A'Kim belongs to the same clan.** Marriages are not allowed within the same clan.

Way Forward

- Government should **enhance communication and connectivity, infrastructure** improvement for better integration of the region with the mainland.
- **Stringent law and fast criminal justice system** for quick disposal of insurgents attack cases should be imposed.
- Government should promote greater **coordination between central forces and state forces for better tactical response** and **greater cultural interaction** with the rest of the country and socio-economic development that includes a holistic inclusive development.

Source: IE

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