



Administration of Assam Rifles

Why in News

Recently, the Delhi High Court has directed the Centre to take a decision on the issue of bringing **Assam Rifles** out of the dual control of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and the Ministry of Defence (MoD).

Key Points

▪ Background:

- A petition was filed by the **Assam Rifles Ex-Servicemen Welfare Association** seeking direction to the government for placing **Assam Rifles under one control**, preferably under the MoD.

▪ Issue:

- The **administrative control of the Assam Rifles is with the MHA** and the **operational control of Assam Rifles rests with the MoD**.
 - This duality of administrative control and operational control leads to **problems of coordination**.
- The objectives and functions of Assam Rifles are that of military and paramilitary force and considering it anything less than that is **arbitrary, unreasonable and in violation of the rights of Assam Rifles personnel**.
- There is a **disparity in the pay scale** between the Assam Rifles personnel operating alongside the Army on similar duties.

▪ Delhi High Court's Direction:

- The issue has been **pending for nearly three years** and now the **Centre should resolve it within 12 weeks with cooperation** from all the stakeholders.
- It noted that “The matter **involves servicemen/ex-servicemen and whose interest is not only to be paramount** but is proclaimed from various platforms of the Government, to be paramount”.

▪ Centre's Stand:

- The in-principle decision, that Assam Rifles like other **Central Armed Police Forces** (CAPFs) **should come under the exclusive control of MHA**, appears to have already been taken but the final decision has not been made official yet.
- The Centre has asked for a period of **further six months** as the process has been **affected by the Covid-19 pandemic**.

Assam Rifles

- Assam Rifles is a **Central Paramilitary Force** under the **Central Armed Police Forces**.
- It came into being in **1835**, as a **militia called the ‘Cachar Levy’**, to primarily **protect British Tea estates and their settlements** against tribal raids.
- It significantly **contributed to the opening of Assam region to administration and**

commerce and over time it came to be known as the “**right arm of the civil and left arm of the military**”.

▪ **Major role post-Independence:**

- Conventional combat role during the **Sino-India War 1962**.
- Operations in a foreign land as part of the **Indian Peace Keeping Force to Sri Lanka** in 1987 (**Operation Pawan**).
- Peacekeeping role in the North-Eastern areas of India.

▪ In November 2019, **MHA proposed to merge it** with the **Indo-Tibetan Border Police** (ITBP).

- ITBP is a specialized mountain force, raised in October 1962.
- It is deployed on border guarding duties from **Karakoram Pass in Ladakh to Jachep La in Arunachal Pradesh** covering 3488 km of Indo-China Border.

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