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Merging of Assam Rifles with the Indo-Tibetan Border Police

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Why in News?

Recently, the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) proposed that the Assam Rifles should be merged with the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP).

Key Points

- Currently, the Assam Rifles is under the administrative control of the Ministry of Home Affairs and operational control of the Army, i.e. the Ministry of Defence.
- This duality of administrative control and operational control leads to problems of coordination.

History of Assam Rifles

- Assam Rifles was formed as a single unit called **Cachar Levy in 1835** to assist the British rulers in **maintaining peace in the Northeast**.
- Later on, this unit was converted into the Assam Military Police Battalion with two additional battalions in 1870.
 - It consisted of Lushai Hills Battalion, Lakhimpur Battalion and Naga Hills Battalion.
 - Another battalion-Darrang Battalion was added, just before World War I.
- **These battalions after their service to British in World War I, were renamed as the Assam Rifles.**
- It was after the **Chinese aggression in 1962** that the Assam Rifles battalions were placed under the operational control of the Army.

Opposition to this Move

- The Army argues that the Assam Rifles should be merged with it.

- Currently, high ranking officers of Assam Rifles are sourced from Army on deputation (as Assam Rifles is presently under the operational control of Ministry of Defense). After the merger of Assam Rifles with ITBP, the former will come under the sole control of MHA. Hence, Army is apprehensive about losing its promotional avenues in Assam rifles, which they presently enjoy.
- Shifting Assam Rifles operational control to MHA may adversely impact vigil along China's border.

Assam Rifles

Indo-Tibetan Border Police

The Assam Rifles came into **being in 1835**.

Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) was raised on 24/10/1962.

- It plays an important role in internal security (counter insurgency and border security operation).
- It also provides aid to the civilians in times of emergency.
- Since 2002 it has been guarding the **Indo-Myanmar**.

- ITBP is deployed on border guarding duties from Karakoram Pass in Ladakh to Jachep La in Arunachal Pradesh covering 3488 km of **Indo-China Border**.
- ITBP is a **specialized mountain force** and most of the officers and men are professionally trained mountaineers and skiers.
- Being the first responder for natural disasters, ITBP has been carrying out numerous rescue and relief operations across the country.

Headquarters of **Assam Rifles is located at Shillong**.

Headquarters of ITBP **is located at New Delhi**.

Source: TH