Adivasi Agitation in Telangana

Why in news?

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- A section of adivasis in northern Telangana districts has boycotted teachers from the Lambada community (Scheduled Tribes).
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- It reveals a conflict between the two groups for the past few months and poses a complex political challenge.
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What is the conflict about?

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- Some Adivasi groups have been demanding the exclusion of the Lambada community from the Schedule Tribe (ST) list.
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- They claim that the Lambadas are “cornering” their opportunities in jobs and education.
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- Adding to the tension, the creation of Telangana has offered the Lambadas an advantage and benefits when compared to other tribes.
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- The protests have hit tribal schools hard since majority of teachers are from the Lambada community.
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What is the reason behind the conflict?

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- Telangana has a total of 32 tribal communities comprising 9.08% of the state’s population.
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- Lambadas comprise majority (20 lakh out of 30 lakh) of the tribal population.
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- The remaining tribal population are from communities such as Gonds, Guthikoyas, Pardhans, Nayakpods, Kolams, Gotis and several others, which are relatively low in number.
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- The Gond people are Adivasis, originally believed to have spread from central India to parts of Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha.
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- The Lambadas have come from different states in the north like Maharashtra, Rajasthan and others.
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- They are listed under BC,OBC and SC in other states.
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- Despite not being tribals they have managed to get listed under the ST category in Telangana.
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- Gond tribals point out that the Lambadas were included in the ST list only in 1976, during the Emergency.
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- Thus, Gonds termed this as unfair through a “backdoor entry".
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What are the implications of the conflict?

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- The boycott in northern Telangana lays bare the political and policy challenge for the state.
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- The absence of teachers has led to poor results and raised the prospect of students dropping out.
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- The boycott deprives tribal children of education which is considered as the most important tool for social and economic mobility.
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- It shows that the claims of relative inequality and discrimination within the Scheduled Caste and Tribe categories have been largely ignored by the government.
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Source: Indian Express

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