Assam Rifles

Why in news?

Recently, Manipur Police have registered an FIR accusing the Assam Rifles (AR) of preventing police from doing their duty.

What is the issue?

- Manipur police have registered an FIR accusing the Assam Rifles (AR) of blocking their way with armoured vehicles and disrupting their duty.
- It alleged that the AR allowed the suspected Kuki militants (who killed Meiteis) to escape.
- ***Meira Paibis***, a women social movement referred as "*guardians of civil society" in Manipur*, have demanded to remove AR from Manipur.
- Manipur Government has written to the Prime Minister accusing the force of being partisan and asked to replace them with any other paramilitary force.

To know more about history of insurgency in Manipur click here

What is Assam Rifles?

> *They are called as Sentinels of North East with the motto of Valour, Glory and Sacrifice*

- It is the *oldest* Central Para Military Force in India.
- It is the *only paramilitary force with a dual control structure*.

Ministry of Home Affairs	Indian Army (Ministry of Defence)
Administrative control	Operational control
It provides salaries and infrastructure for the force	It is associated with the deployment, posting, transfers, and deputation of AR personnel
Recruitment, perks, and promotion of AR personnel, and their retirement policies are governed according to rules framed by the ministry.	All its senior ranks, from DG to IG and sector headquarters are manned by officers from the Army.

- **Command-** Lieutenant General of the Indian Army
- **Headquarters** - *Shillong*
- **Primary mandate**
  - Counter-insurgency
  - Border guarding
- **Function**

    - Maintaining law and order in the Northeast along with the Indian Army
    - It is designated by the Constitution of Group of Ministers (GoM) committee as the Border Guarding Force for the *Indo - Myanmar border.*
- **Strength-** It have a sanctioned strength of more than 63,000 personnel, organised in 46 battalions, apart from administrative and training staff.

What is the history of Assam Rifles?

- The Assam Rifles was raised as *Cachar Levy* in 1835 to protect British tea estates and their settlements against tribal raids.
- **Assam Frontier Force**- AR was expanded to conduct punitive operations beyond the borders of Assam.
- It came to be known as the *"right arm of the civil and left arm of the military".*
- **Battalion force-** In 1870, the elements of the force were merged into three Assam Military Police Battalions, named after the Lushai Hills, Lakhimpur, and the Naga Hills.
- **Darang Battalion-** It was raised just before the onset of World War I. Since it was difficult to mobilise reservists at short notice, and soldiers of the Gurkha Battalion were on leave in Nepal, the Assam Military Police were tasked to take their place.
- **Name change** - In 1917, the name of the force was changed to Assam Rifles, recognising their work during the Great War, in which they fought shoulder-to-shoulder with Rifle Regiments of the British Arm.
- **World War II-** After the Japanese advance in 1942, the Assam Rifles fought a number of independent actions behind enemy lines.
- They also organised a resistance group, *the Victor Force,* on the Indo-Burmese border to counter the Japanese forces and to harass the enemy line of communications.
- **Participation-**
    - First World War, Second World War
    - Sino-Indian war of 1962
    - An anti-insurgency force against militant groups in the Northeast

What are the issues with Assam Rifles?

- **Administration -** The perks and retirement benefits are far better than those enjoyed by the CAPFs under MHA.
- However, Army personnel retire early at age of 35 while the retirement age of CAPFs is 60 years.
- **Non-functional financial upgradation (NFFU)-** It is granted to CAPF to financially address the issue of stagnation in their careers due to lack of avenues for promotions.
- Army personnel get '*One Rank, One Pension' (OROP)* which is not available to CAPFs.
- **Ministry of Home Affairs stand-** It argued that all the border-guarding forces are under its operational control and wishes to take full control over Assam Rifles.
- AR continues to function on lines that were decided back in the 1960s, and the Ministry would want the Indo-Myanmar border to be guarded by personnel who work on the pattern of other CAPFs.
- **Ministry of Defence stand-** The sharing of responsibilities between the two forces

frees up the armed forces to focus on their core strengths.

- Indian Army argued that AR is always a military force and not a police force and wishes to take full control over Assam Rifles.
- It has argued that giving control over the force to the MHA, or merging it with any other CAPF will send confusing signals and will affect national security.

References

1. The Hindu- Manipur police filed FIR against AR
2. Assam Rifles- History of AR
3. Ministry of Home Affairs- Central Armed Police Forces

SHANKAR IAS PARLIAMENT
Information is Empowering