Bodo Accord

Why in News?

The Centre, the Assam government and Bodo groups have signed an agreement for peace and development.

Who are the Bodos?

- Bodos are the single largest community among the notified Scheduled Tribes in Assam.
- Part of the larger umbrella of Bodo-Kachari, the Bodos constitute about 5-6% of Assam's population.

What is the Bodo issue?

- The first organised demand for a Bodo state came in 1967-68.
- In 1985, when the Assam Movement culminated in the Assam Accord, many Bodos saw it as essentially focusing on the interests of the Assamese-speaking community.
- In 1987, the All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) revived the Bodo statehood demand.
- It subsequently renamed itself National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB), and later split into factions.

What are the previous accords?

- The 1987 ABSU-led movement culminated in a **1993 Bodo Accord**, which paved the way for a Bodoland Autonomous Council (BAC).
- But ABSU withdrew its agreement and renewed its demand for a separate state.
- The **2003 Bodo Accord** was signed by the extremist group Bodo Liberation Tiger Force (BLTF), the Centre and the state.
- This led to the formation of the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) which is an autonomous body under the Constitution.

What has been settled now?

- Primarily, this Accord ends a truce with four factions of the NDFB after decades of armed movement that claimed over 4,000 lives.

- The agreement says that negotiations were held with Bodo organisations for a comprehensive and final solution to their demands while keeping intact the territorial integrity of the State of Assam.
- A minister said the demand for statehood came to end with the Accord.
- However, an ABSU leader said that there is no mention anywhere in the settlement that the ABSU will give up the statehood demand.

What was agreed on territory?

- The area under the jurisdiction of BTC was called the Bodo Territorial Autonomous District (BTAD).
- In 2020 Accord, the **BTAD was renamed to BTR** (Bodoland Territorial Region).
- BTAD comprises Kokrajhar, Chirang, Baksa and Udalguri districts, accounting for 11% of Assam's area.
- The new Accord provides for alteration of area of BTAD and provisions for Bodos outside BTAD.
- A **commission** appointed by the state government will examine and recommend if villages contiguous to BTAD and with a majority tribal population can be included into the BTR.
- Those villages, now in BTAD and with a majority non-tribal population can opt out of the BTR.
- This will lead to increase in the Bodo population in BTR and decrease in non-tribal population, leading to mitigation of inter-community clashes.
- The government will set up a **Bodo-Kachari Welfare Council** for focused development of Bodo villages outside BTAD.

What are the other provisions?

- Several of the provisions agreed upon in 2020 agreement were an extension of what was already in effect.
    1. It provides for more legislative, executive, administrative and financial powers to BTC.
    2. The amendments to the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution to improve the financial resources and administrative powers of BTC.
- This agreement says the Government of Assam will notify Bodo language in Devanagri script as the associate official language in the state.

What will happen to the cases filed during the armed movement?

- The Memorandum of Settlement (MoS) says criminal cases for non-heinous crimes shall be withdrawn.
- It also says those cases in connection with heinous crimes shall be reviewed

case by case according to the existing policy on the subject.

- The MoS states New Delhi and Dispur will take all necessary steps to rehabilitate the cadres, funding economic activities, vocational trading and recruitment in appropriate government jobs.

Source: Indian Express

