Chin-Kuki-Mizo Refugees

What is the issue?

1. *Bangladeshi tribal nationals entered Mizoram, trying to flee fighting between Bangladeshi security forces and the Kuki-Chin National Army (KNA), an armed insurgent group in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT).*
2. *The Mizoram Cabinet resolved to give temporary shelter, food and other relief Chin-Kuki-Mizo refugees as per convenience of the state government.*

What is the refugee problem in Mizoram?

- **From Bangladesh** - The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) is an impoverished hilly, forested area that is found in the Khagrachari, Rangamati, and Bandarban districts of Bangladesh.
- It borders Mizoram to the east, Tripura to the north, and Myanmar to the south and southeast.
- A significant portion of the **population is tribal**, and culturally and ethnically different from the majority **Muslim Bangladeshis**.
- The tribal population of the CHT has ethnic links with tribal populations in the adjacent areas of India, mainly in Mizoram.
- **From Mizoram** - Mizoram is already hosting about 30,000 refugees who have been fleeing fighting in **Myanmar's Chin state** since July-August 2021.
- A pro-democracy civilian resistance group called the Chin Defence Force has been fighting the forces of the junta ever since the military coup of February 2021.

Chin Defence Force is backed and trained by the Chin National Army (CNA), an ethnic armed organisation active in Myanmar.

What is the stance of the Union Government of India?

India is not a signatory to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention or its 1962 Protocol, and does not have a domestic policy on refugees.

- When people began pouring in from Myanmar's Chin State, the Union Home Ministry asked the Northeastern states to act against "the illegal influx".
- But the Mizoram government has openly differed with the Centre on the issue of refugees. It has continued to welcome the refugees.
- The increasing numbers of refugees have, however, put strain on the state's resources, and several NGOs, the church, and youth organisations have joined the effort.

- The Centre has so far not prevented Mizoram from helping the refugees.

What is the complex conflict in the CHT?

- The Kuki-Chin National Front (KNF) is an ethnic separatist organisation that claims to represent the interests of the Kuki-Chin-Mizo communities living in the area.
- The KNF emerged around 2008, with the demand of a separate state in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.
- The Kuki-Chin National Army (KNA), the armed wing of the KNF, is fighting soldiers of the Bangladesh Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) in the CHT.
- The KNF claims all members of the Bawm, Pungkhua, Lushai, Khumi, Mro, and Khyang ethnic groups belong to a greater Kuki-Chin race.
- **Deal** - The amir of the Jama'atul Ansar, Md Anisur Rahman alias Mahmud and the KNF chief Nathan Bom had "struck a three-year agreement" at the beginning of 2021.
- As per the deal, the KNF was providing shelter, training and other support to the militants.
- In return, the militant outfit was giving the KNF Bangladeshi Taka 3 lakh per month and the expenditure for food".
- The Zo Reunification Organisation (ZORO) had told that the Bangladesh Army has entered into a secret pact with Myanmar-based Arakan Army to launch joint operations against KNA.

The Zo Reunification Organisation (ZORO) is a Mizoram-based association fighting for the re-unification of Chin-Kuki-Mizo tribes of India, Myanmar and Bangladesh.

Reference

1. Indian Express | Chin-Kuki-Mizo refugees pour into Mizoram

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