Issues with Displacement of Bru People

Why in news?

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Making Bru people to return to their home from the relief camps is frustrating the government.

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Who are Bru population?

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- The Brus, also called Reangs, are scattered across Assam, Mizoram and Tripura.
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- In Mizoram, they inhabit small pockets of Mamit, Lunglei and Lawngtlai districts, but the biggest chunk is in Mamit bordering North Tripura district of Tripura.
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- A conflict with the majority Mizos in 1995 made influential organisations like the MizoZirlai Pawl (students' union) demand that the Brus, labelled a non-indigenous tribe, be deleted from Mizoram's electoral rolls.
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- This led to an armed movement by the extremist Bru National Liberation Front, which killed a Mizo forest official on October 21, 1997.
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What was the impact of the conflict?

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- Many Bru villages were burnt down and scores allegedly raped and killed, which led to displacement of 40,000 bru people.
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- Thousands of Brus fled to North Tripura where they were given shelter in six relief camps, three each in the Kanchanpur and Panisagar subdivisions.
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- Most of the refugees were from Mamit and a few from Kolasib and Lunglei.
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- Except for some say in three of Mizoram’s 40 Assembly constituencies, the Brus are not a major voting force.
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- Resistance by Mizo NGOs to their return made the refugees relevant only during elections, with Mizoram official’s crossing over to Tripura for facilitating their franchise.
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What are the challenges in addressing the issue?

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- Making the population return home from relief camps in adjoining Tripura has been equally frustrating for the Centre and the north-eastern States for almost 21 years now.
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- With time, the Brus began demanding relief on a par with that of Kashmiri Pandit and Sri Lankan Tamil refugees.
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- The impasse increased the Centre’s bill. Since 1997, it has given Rs.348.97 crore to Tripura in financial assistance for relief and rehabilitation, and Rs.68.9 crore to Mizoram for those resettled in 2010.
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- A few families have accepted the package offered by the Centre and returned, but most of the internally displaced refugees have refused to budge unless they get a better deal.
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- The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has set them a September 30 deadline and threatened to stop free rations and other facilities.
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What are current measures taken in this regard?

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- The MHA brought the stakeholders to the talks in 2015, and a financial package of Rs.435 crore was arrived at in July.
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- Centre signed an agreement with the Mizoram Bru Displaced People’s Forum

and the governments of Mizoram and Tripura.
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- The package covers 32,876 members of 5,407 Bru families, entailing a one-time assistance of Rs.4 lakh in fixed deposit within a month of repatriation, monthly assistance of Rs.5,000 through direct benefit transfer, free rations for two years, and Rs.1.5 lakh in three instalments for building houses.
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Source: The Hindu

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