Language Politics in West Bengal

Why in news?

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Gorkha Janmukti Morcha (GJM) renewed its demand for a separate Gorkhaland state.

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What is the reason?

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- GJM is a political party which campaigns for the creation of a separate state Gorkhaland within India, out of districts in the north of West Bengal.
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- The recent protests started with the suspicion that Bengali would be made mandatory in the hills.
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- Later it spiralled into a broad-based ‘indefinite’ agitation with the GJM targeting symbols of the state and ordering closure of all government offices.
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- In May, Chief Minister of West Bengal had announced that all students would have to study Bengali from Class I.
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- She later clarified that it would not be compulsory in the hill district of Darjeeling.
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What should have been done?

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- Language has been a fraught issue in the Darjeeling hills for more than a century.
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- So the chief minister should have made the announcement without consulting the Gorkhaland Territorial Administration (GTA), the semi-

autonomous body that runs the affairs of the hill town.
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- Though later it was clarified that her government has no intention of making Bengali compulsory in schools in Darjeeling, the damage was done.
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Why Bengali should be learnt?

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- Identity politics aside, there is something utilitarian about learning a language.
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- Learning the language, formally, will only help expand the economic avenues of Nepali-speaking people in the Darjeeling hills in West Bengal.
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Source: The Hindu

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