NRC for Tripura

Why in news?

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Demand for National Register of Citizens for Tripura, on the lines of the NRC in Assam, has been rising in recent times.

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Who are Tripura's indigenous people?

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- There are 19 notified Scheduled Tribes in Tripura, among whom the Tripuris are the largest group.
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- The Tripuris are also considered the aboriginals as they migrated first.
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- The princely state of Tripura was ruled by the Manikya dynasty, belonging to the Tripuri community, from the late 13th century until the signing of Instrument of Accession with the Indian government on October 15, 1949.
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- Other important groups that are migrated at various times include Reang and Jamatia (via the Chittagong Hill Tracts from parts of Burma), Bhil, Orang and Santhal (from parts of central India and Bengal).
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- The 2011 Census puts the number of Tripuris, who belong to the Indo-Mongoloid family, at 5.92 lakh, followed by Reangs (1.88 lakh) and Jamatias (83,000).
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What is the extent of migration by non-tribal groups?

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- From 63.77% of Tripura’s population in 1881, tribal population were reduced to 31.80% in 2011.
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- This followed the migration of 6.10 lakh Bengalis between 1947 and 1971, displaced from then East Pakistan.
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- The migration was also present before 1947, though it became high after Partition.
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- The Manikya kings had hired Bengalis from their estate in Bangladeshto work in its administration, and encouraged them to settle in the plains to spread settled cultivation.
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How many Bengalis live in Tripura now?

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- According to Language Census 2011, Bengali was the mother tongue of 24.14 lakh people in Tripura.
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- This represents 2/3rds of the 36.74 lakh population, and almost three times of Kokborok speaking people, which is a language of the Tibeto-Burman family and the mother tongue of the largest tribal groups.
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- In 1979, Kokborok was accorded the status of official language, alongside Bengali and English.
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- Though it uses the Bengali script, indigenous groups have been demanding recognition of the Roman script for Kokborok.
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- The dominance of Bengali in the state, however, cannot be attributed to recent migration alone.
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- It was the official court language of princely Tripura at a time when English was the official language of Bengal, while Manikya kings promoted Bengali.

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- Thus the current demand stems from the issue of illegal migration after Tripura's merger with the Indian Union, and not because of an altogether anti-bengali stance of the people.
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Has migration not been an issue earlier?

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- A first tribal insurgent group was emerged in the 1960s and it reached its peak in 1980, wherein insurgents got involved in mass massacres against Bengalis.
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- Though the militant group entered into a peace agreement with New Delhi, the crisis doesn't end there.
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- According to the South Asia Terrorism Portal, 2509 civilians, 455 security personnel and 519 insurgents were killed between 1992 and 2012.
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- Various research identifies "land alienation" as the root cause behind ethnic strife and hencethere is a requirement of land reforms and a revisit of political representation.
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- This results in the emergence of demand for NRC, particularly after the exercise in Assam, wherein a new forum called "The Tripura People's Front"suggesting July 19, 1948 as the cut-off date.
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- Various groups from Tripura including the Indigenous Nationalist Party of Tripura (INPT) has also raised a similar demand.
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What should be done?

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- The central government has promised a committee to address the rights of the indigenous population, and strengthening of the TTADC.
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- The Tripura Tribal Autonomous District Council(TTADC), covering 2/3rds (7,332 sq. km) of the state's area, was set up in 1979 and brought under the

Sixth Schedule in 1985.
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- The Centre has also formed a 13-member committee to address tribal grievances.
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- The state had rejected the demand for an NRC but it is open to such an initiative if the NRC exercise in Assam is successful.
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Source: The Indian Express

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