Sri Lanka’s hill-country Tamils

Why in news?

\n\n

Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s took a public rally with Sri Lanka’s hill-country Tamils on his two-day visit to the country.

\n\n

Who are hill-country Tamils?

\n\n

\n
- They are Tamil people of Indian origin in Sri Lanka.
\n
- They are partly descended from workers sent from South India to Sri Lanka in the 19th and 20th centuries to work in coffee, tea and rubber plantations.
\n
- The other group of Tamils called Sri Lankan Tamils descended from the Tamils of the old Jaffna kingdom and reside in the east coast.
\n

\n\n

What is their condition?

\n\n

\n
- Most estate schools lack teachers for mathematics and science, limiting higher education and employment choices for students.
\n
- While Sri Lanka excels in public health delivery and indicators, services in plantation areas are woefully inadequate.
\n
- The India-funded hospital is also short-staffed, overburdened and is struggling to serve the local community.
\n
- Several decades of neglect by the plantation companies and the state, have pushed hill-country Tamils to the margins of society.
\n

- It will take substantial political commitment from the government to deliver what is due to this community and bridge the gap between the hill country and the rest of the island.
\n
- Their cabinet decided to provide seven perches of land to estate residents to address their landlessness.
\n
- Acknowledging the estate sector as “most deprived”, the government unveiled an ambitious National Plan of Action for the Social Development of the Plantation Community (2016-2020).
\n

\n\n

What is the significance of the visit?

\n\n

\n
- PM’s visit to the region is the first by an Indian Prime Minister.
\n
- The visit was a strong affirmation of the community’s economic and political significance.
\n
- Hill-country leaders sought greater assistance in education.
\n
- India also has offered to build 14,000 houses, a drop in the ocean of the nearly 1,60,000 homes the community needs.
\n
- Indian assistance to a deprived region is certainly welcome but it can only supplement what Sri Lanka ought to deliver.
\n

\n\n

\n\n

Source: The Hindu

\n

