

Tensions between hill and valley people in Manipur

Why in news?

The clashes in Manipur corresponds to the genesis of the decades-old Meitei-Kuki divide.

What is the demographic dividend of Manipur?

- Manipur is bounded by Assam, Nagaland, Mizoram, and Myanmar.
- Most of Manipur is surrounded by hills with a fertile saucer shaped valley in the middle.
- It has 10 hill districts inhabited by various tribes.
- About 40% of the state's 28 lakh people (2011 census) live in the hills.

Which are the major communities residing in Manipur?

- The central valley in the state accounts for about 10% of the landmass of Manipur.
- The majority Meitei community (Hindus) and the Meitei Pangal (Muslims) who constitute roughly 64.6% of the state's population, live in the densely populated valley.
- This is because of the power centre from a time when Meitei Kings rules the region.
- The remaining 90% of the state's geographical area comprises hills surrounding the valley, which are home to the recognized tribes, making up about 35.4% of the state's population.
- There are 34 recognized tribes, which are broadly classified as 'Any Kuki Tribes' and 'Any Naga Tribes'.



Who are Meitei people?

- Meiteis, are the valley people present predominantly in the Imphal valley, and they are Hindus.
- Meiteis speak Meitei language which is one of the 22 schedule languages of the constitution.
- Meitei enjoyed tribal status even before September 1949 when the princely state of Manipur signed merger agreement with Indian union.
- Meiteis also get more representation in the state assembly as 40 of the total 60 assembly seats in Manipur are from the Imphal Valley region.

What are the reasons for the clash?

- Dominant status of Meitei people since Meiteis are the largest community in Manipur and constitute 64.6% of the Manipur population.
- Part of Meitei's also enjoy the status of backward caste (OBC).

- Meitei population which was 59% of the total population of Manipur in 1951 has now been reduced to 44% as per 2011 Census data.
- Protections given to hill areas and restrictions on non-tribals buying land in hill districts led to a demand seeking ST status for the Meiteis 12 years ago.
- Recently the Manipur high court directed the Manipur government to submit a report on the granting ST status to Meitei.
- Land survey conducted in the hills areas have created fear of eviction to the tribes in the hilly region fueling the tension in the Manipur.

Article 371C of the Indian Constitution deals with the Special provision with respect to the State of Manipur.

Quick Facts

Scheduled Tribes (STs)

- **Article 366** - Defines schedule tribe as any tribe deemed under article 342.
- **Article 342** - Provides for specification of tribes which are deemed to be for the purposes of the Constitution the Scheduled Tribes in relation to that State or Union Territory.
- **Criteria** - To specify any community as ST the following are the criteria
 - Indications of primitive traits,
 - Distinctive culture,
 - Geographical isolation,
 - Shyness of contact with the community at large, and
 - Backwardness.
- These criteria are not spelt out in the Constitution.

To know about National Commission for Scheduled Tribes [click here](#).

References

1. [The Indian Express | Violence In Manipur](#)
2. [Hindustan Times | Cause Of Manipur Violence](#)