ULFA Peace Accord

Why in news?

Recently, the pro-talks faction of the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) have signed a historic tripartite peace deal with the Government of India and the State government of Assam.

Who is ULFA?

- **Historical background** – There was an influx of migrants from all over since 19th century into Assam.
- It was further exacerbated by the Partition in 1947 and the subsequent exodus of refugees from the erstwhile-East Pakistan.
- The competition for resources skyrocketed, resulting in a 6-year long mass movement from 1979.

The Assam Accord, seeking to find a solution to the problem of foreigners in Assam was signed in 1985 but it was not sufficient to prevent the emergence of radical groups like ULFA, Mizo National Front and National Liberation Front of Tripura.

- **ULFA** – United Liberation Front of Assam was born during the *anti-foreigners movement* of ***1979***.
- **Aim** – To establish a sovereign Assamese nation through an armed struggle against the Indian state.
- **Current leaders** – Arabinda Rajkhowa and Paresh Baruah.
- **Geographical spread** – It still has camps in *Myanmar*, and previously had camps in both Bangladesh and Bhutan.
- Lying deep in jungles and hilly areas, these camps act as launch pads for *cross border operations*, as well as shelter after the fact.
- **Links to other insurgents** – Outfits in the Northeast, Myanmar and also with Islamic terror outfits like Al-Qaeda.
- It also has links to Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI), which has reportedly trained ULFA insurgents in the past.

*ULFA openly supported Pakistan in its **monthly newsletter Swadhinata** during the Kargil War.*

- **Impact** – For over 44 years, this struggle has been chequered with *kidnappings and*

extortion, executions and bomb blasts, leading to tragic loss of life in Assam and beyond.

What is the response by Indian government?

- **Military measures** – It has launched ***Operation Bajrang (1990)*** that has arrested many ULFA insurgents.
- Assam was declared a 'disturbed area', President's rule was imposed and *Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA)* was invoked.

After ULFA Peace Accord, only 15% area in Assam remained under the AFSPA.

- **Strategic measures** – It has allegedly supported certain factions of ULFA, like ***Surrendered ULFA (SULFA) in 1992*** that offered to surrender and engage in dialogue with the government.
- Later SULFA allegedly carried out secret killings of ULFA cadres on behalf of the State government.

What are the key points of ULFA Peace Accord?

Path towards ULFA Peace Accord
• **PCG** – People's Consultative Group is an 11 member group formed by ULFA in 2005. • It comprised noted intellectuals and *Jnanpith awardee author late Indira Raisom Goswami*. • It mediated 3 rounds of talks before the ULFA walked out of the discussions and unleashed a new wave of terror. • **Peace oriented factions** – Some ULFA commanders like Arabinda Rajkhowa proposed peace talks with the government called as *Rajkhowa-led pro-talk ULFA faction*. • **Peace talks** – In 2011, the pro-talk faction signed the *suspension of operation (SoO)* with the MHA and the Assam government. • **12-point charter** – In *2012, they submitted their demands* to the central government, which finally responded in 2023. • Discussions happened between Rajkhowa's faction and the Centre in 2023, leading to the recent tripartite peace agreement.

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- **Surrendering the arms -** ULFA cadres have agreed to *surrender arms and ammunition, vacate their camps.*
- They have decided to join the mainstream and to engage in the *peaceful democratic process* established by law and maintain the integrity of the country.
- It would be made a time-bound programme by the Ministry of Home Affairs to fulfil the demands of the ULFA.
- **Committee formation** - A committee would also be formed for monitoring the programme implementation.
- **Reservation** - 97 out of 126 Assembly seats in Assam would be reserved for indigenous people and the future delimitation exercise would follow this principle.
- **Financial support** – *Rs. 1.5 lakh crore investment* had been pledged in the peace

accord.

- **Constitutional safeguards** – It would be ensured by *protecting land rights* and putting *restrictions on migration* from one constituency to another.

The faction led by Paresh Baruah, known as ULFA-I, has not joined the peace process. Baruah is said to be in China and has support of 100 cadres who mainly operate from the Myanmar border.

References

1. The Indian Express| History of ULFA and path towards peace
2. The Hindu| Key points of ULFA Peace Accord

