Withdrawal of AFSPA from Nagaland

Why in news?

Centre sets up panel to look into withdrawal of AFSPA in Nagaland and submit its report within 45 days

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Why was the Act imposed in Nagaland?

- The Army was entrusted with the task of securing peace against insurgents with bases across the international border in Myanmar.
- The AFSPA provides legal protection to the Army, which had to operate in a war-like situation against well-armed and well-trained guerrilla outfits in hostile terrain.

Why was the panel formed?

- 14 civilians were gunned down by security forces at Oting village of Mon district in a botched anti-insurgency operation.
- Earlier, the Nagaland assembly had unanimously adopted a resolution demanding that the Centre repeal AFSPA from the northeast and specially from the state
- In a meeting headed by Home Minister the Union government has instituted a high-level committee to examine the possibility of withdrawing AFSPA in Nagaland.
- The committee will submit its report within 45 days.

Is the move a step in the right direction?

- The 1997 ceasefire was signed between the government and the NSCN-IM. This resulted in a conversation towards ending the insurgency.
- The 2015 Framework Agreement signed raised hopes of a resolution, including on the question of Naga sovereignty.
- However the recent gun down threatens to halt the progress on Naga talks and endanger the gains of the past two decades.
- The AFSPA panel needs to keep in mind the groundswell for peace in Nagaland, a result of the extraordinary work put in by civil society groups such as the Naga Mothers Association.
- It can take recourse to studying precedents like withdrawal of AFSPA from Tripura, Meghalaya, districts in Arunachal Pradesh and Assam in response to a decline in violence.
- Naga insurgency is a more complex phenomenon. However a new generation, more invested in peace and prosperity, has come of age in Nagaland.
- Their future needs to be guarded from the vicious cycle of violence that has laid previous generations to waste
- Therefore present move is a step in the right direction. Centre must build on it.

Reference

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