

AIR Spotlight - Karbi Anglong Peace Accord

AIR Spotlight is an insightful programme featured daily on the All India Radio Newsonair. In this program, many eminent panellists discuss issues of importance which can be quite helpful in [IAS exam](#) preparation. In this article, the topic of discussion is the recently concluded Karbi Anglong Peace Accord.

Participants:

- Partha Pratim Hazarika, Senior Journalist
- Manas Pratim Sharma, AIR Correspondent

Context:

The Centre, the Assam government, and insurgency groups from the state of Assam have signed an agreement to bring peace to the Northeastern state's Karbi-Anglong district.

Background:

- In 1996, two groups – Karbi National Volunteers (KNV) and Karbi People's Force (KPF) – were formed. These militant outfits however never got the prominence they sought and the formation of splinter groups continued.
- In 1999, both the organizations came under one banner and named themselves the United Peoples' Democratic Solidarity (UPDS).
- In 2002, the UPDS entered into a ceasefire agreement with the Indian Government. However, in 2004, the anti-talk faction of the UPDS formed the Karbi Longri North Cachar Hills Liberation Front (KLNLF).
- On February 11, 2010, KLNLF too entered into a ceasefire agreement with the government in a ceremony held at Diphu. In this ceremony, 403 cadres of the KLNLF laid down their arms. However, a few days prior to the ceremony, a total of 17 cadres led by Amitabh Hanse defected with weapons to later form the Karbi People's Liberation Tigers (KPLT).
- The breakaway group declared they will continue to wage an armed struggle until the grievances and aspirations of the Karbi people are addressed.
- The faction divided itself into three subgroups spread across different areas of the Karbi Anglong District under different leaders to project themselves as the sole group fighting for Karbi statehood.
- KPLT is reported to have links with ULFA (I), NDFB (S), and NSCN (IM). Being the only armed fighting force for Karbi statehood, it enjoys the illicit support of all the political groups fighting for Karbi's cause.
- As the Centre engaged with all these various groups, in February 2021, more than 1,000 members of five outfits – **People's Democratic Council of Karbi Longri (PDCK)**, **Karbi Longri North Cachar Hills Liberation Front (KLNLF)**, **Karbi People's Liberation Tigers (KPLT)**, **Kuki Liberation Front (KLF)** and **United People's Liberation Army (UPLA)** laid down their weapons.
- The Centre signed a tripartite "Karbi Anglong Agreement" with a group of representatives of Karbi outfits in the national capital in the presence of Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma.

- Hailed as a “historic” move, the accord aims to “end the decades-old crisis” and ensure Assam’s territorial integrity and comes months after more than 1,000 members of armed outfits came forward to surrender and give up the path of violence.

Read more on the background of the discord and the [Karbi Anglong Agreement](#) in the linked article.

Significance of Karbi Anglong Peace Accord:

- Karbi Anglong and its neighbouring districts have been a hotbed of insurgency which has affected the overall development not only in these districts but also other parts of Assam.
- This Peace Accord would help in bringing the long-pending development in Karbi Anglong.
- Karbi Anglong is a tribal area and tribal areas are generally neglected in terms of development. This peace accord can change all that.

What does the Peace Accord say?

- The Accord will ensure greater devolution of autonomy to the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, protection of identity, language, culture, etc. of Karbi people and focussed development of the Council area, without affecting the territorial and administrative integrity of Assam.
- Under the agreement, the armed groups will shun violence and join the democratic process while the government will facilitate the rehabilitation of their cadres.
- The accord also talks about giving “more legislative, executive, administrative and financial powers to KAAC” and setting up “a Karbi Welfare Council for focussed development of Karbi people living outside the KAAC area”.
- One of the highlights of the accord is the creation of a Special Development Package of Rs 1,000 crore for the state to run over a period of five years that will fund “specific projects for the development of Karbi areas”.

How this Peace Accord will help in the development of Assam?

- The development of Karbi Anglong district will help in the development of Assam as well.
- The government of Assam shall set up a Karbi Welfare Council for the focussed development of Karbi people living outside the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council area.
- The Consolidated Fund of the State will be augmented to supplement the resources of the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council.
- Overall, the present settlement proposes to give more legislative, executive, administrative and financial powers to the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council.
- The economic package of Rs. 1000 crore should be utilized effectively and there should be a government authority to monitor the implementation of the projects.

Permanent Peace in the North-East Region:

- The North-East is a very diverse region in all aspects such as sociological, economic, and political. The government is taking continuous measures to develop all the aspects in the North-East region. But, there are other aspects also which require attention.

- There are lots of acting groups in the North-East who have been facing identity crises and other issues as well. So, the Central government should focus on a holistic plan so that in the North-East, every state can develop in a fair and equitable manner.
- The major concern in the North-East is the end of the insurgency. If the insurgency continues, that will lead to instability. Hence, the focus should be on maintaining long-term stability and peace.

Also read: [Naga insurgency](#)

ULFA and the Peace Accord:

- The United Liberation Front of Asom Independent (ULFA-I) is an armed far-leftist separatist organization in Assam. It seeks to establish an independent sovereign nation-state of Assam for the indigenous Assamese through armed struggle.
- ULFA has been an old issue (since 1984); there has been a serious effort to bring back Paresh Barua, the leader of ULFA-I to the mainstream.
- Himanta Biswa Sarma said that the representative has been in touch with ULFA chief Paresh Baruah and very soon ULFA (I) could join peace talks with the centre.
- It is a positive development that the government is trying to make peace with ULFA (I) and it is equally positive to see the peaceful response from the ULFA (I) chief.
- But, Paresh Baruah is a businessman apart from being the ULFA (I) chief and his business interests lie in many other countries as well. Besides, it is a well-known fact that he has been under the influence of China as he was shifted to a safer place by the Chinese army when Myanmar attacked the ULFA camps.
- Hence, Baruah's links with the Chinese may cast doubts on whether he would come to the negotiating table or not.
- Bringing Paresh Baruah to the negotiating table will resolve the insurgency issue in Assam as the ULFA is the only big militant group that is out of the Peace Accord.

Way Forward:

- The government has said that it will welcome any insurgents who want to give up arms and join the mainstream.
- The main focus of the government is to ensure that every citizen abides by the laws because once the Peace Accord is signed by any individual or group, no one will step back.
- The entire process of rehabilitation should be very concrete and holistic.

Read more Gist of AIR Spotlight [here](#).