

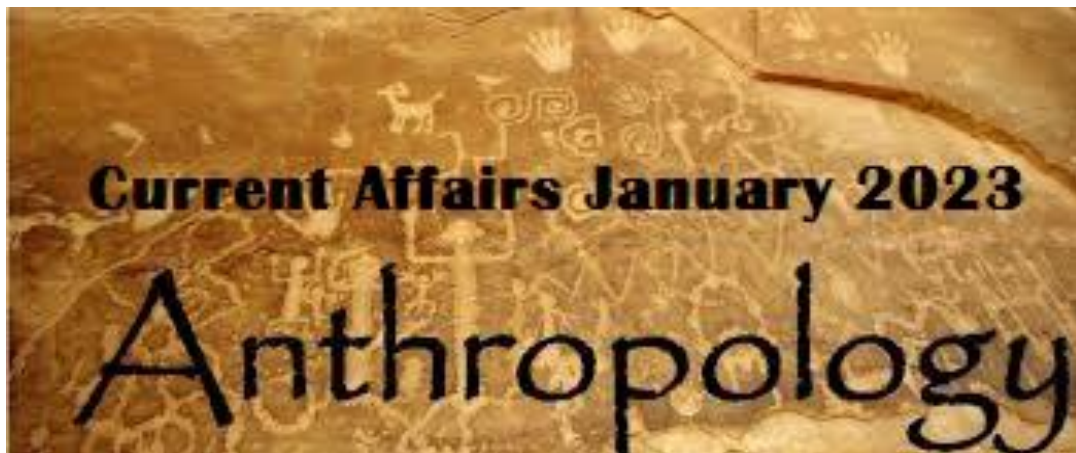
**ANTHROPOLOGY CURRENT AFFAIRS MAGAZINE  
JANUARY 2023**

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## PAPER -1

### PHYSICAL & ARCHAEOLOGICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

#### 1. 20,000-year-old cave painting 'dots' are the earliest written language, study claims.

Stone Age dots, lines and Y-shaped marks might represent a type of proto-writing created by hunter-gatherers who lived in Europe at least 20,000 years ago



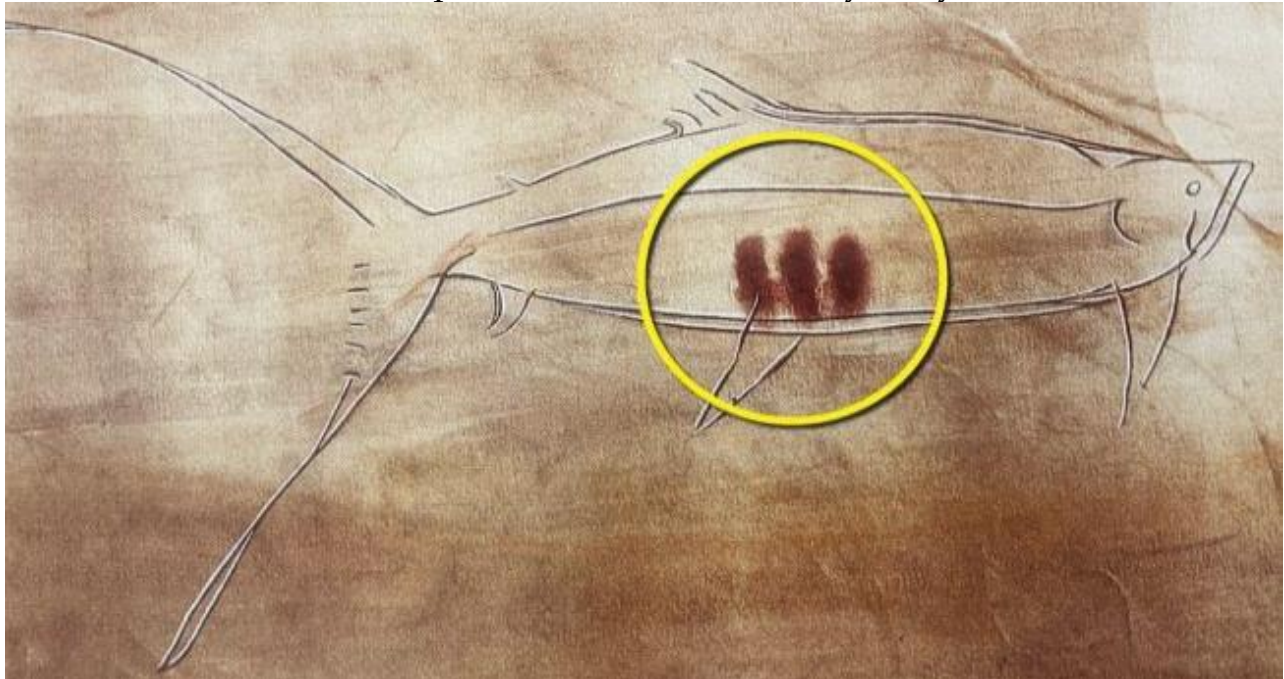
A 21,500-year-old cave painting depicting an aurochs, an extinct cattle species, in the Lascaux caves in France. Notice the four dots (within the digital yellow circle), which may have had a special meaning for ice age peoples.

At least 20,000 years ago, humans living in Europe created striking cave paintings of animals that they paired with curious signs: lines, dots and Y-shaped symbols. These marks, which are well known to researchers, might relate to the seasonal behavior of prey animals, making the signs the first known writing in the history of humankind, a new study claims.

Although Paleolithic cave art is better known for its graceful horses and ghostly handprints, there are thousands of nonfigurative or abstract marks that researchers have begun studying only in the past few decades. In a study published Jan. 5 in the Cambridge Archaeology Journal a team of scholars suggests that these seemingly abstract dots and lines, when positioned near animal imagery, actually represent a sophisticated writing system that explains early humans' understanding of the mating and birthing seasons of important local species.

Other researchers, however, are not convinced by the study's interpretations of these human-made marks.

Melanie Chang a paleoanthropologist at Portland State University who was not involved in the study, told Live Science in an email that she agrees with the researchers' assessment that "Upper Palaeolithic people had the cognitive capacity to write and to keep records of time." However, she cautioned that the researchers' "hypotheses are not well-supported by their results, and they also do not address alternative interpretations of the marks they analyzed."



This image of an 17,000-year-old engraved salmon, from Pindal cave in Asturias, Spain, has three lines placed within.

### **What do the painted marks mean?**

Early humans in Europe were hunter-gatherers who ate a lot of meat from species such as horses, deer and bison. When those animals came together

seasonally in herds, they would have been vulnerable to slaughter by humans. "It follows that knowledge of the timing of migrations, mating and birthing would be a central concern to Upper Paleolithic behaviour," study first author Bennett Bacon, an independent researcher and furniture conservator based in London, and colleagues wrote in their study.

Looking at the total number of marks – either dots or lines – found in sequences across hundreds of caves, the researchers discovered that none of the series contained more than 13 marks, consistent with the 13 lunar months in each year. "We hypothesize that sequences are conveying information about their associated animal taxa in units of months," they wrote, noting that spring, "with its obvious signals of the end of winter and corresponding faunal migrations to breeding grounds, would have provided an obvious, if regionally differing, point of origin for the lunar calendar."

An annotated image of a roughly 23,000-year-old painting showing four dots associated with a red ochre drawing of an aurochs in La Pasiega cave in Cantabria, Spain.



The researchers' statistical analysis of more than 800 sequences of marks associated with animals supports their idea – they found strong correlations

between the number of marks and the lunar months in which the specific animal is known to mate.

Taking their hypothesis a step further, Bacon and colleagues focused on a Y-shaped sign that they think refers to a particular event in an animal's life cycle. Similar statistical analysis supports their conclusion that the placement of the Y-shaped sign within a series of marks signals an animal species' birthing season. "The ability to assign abstract signs to phenomena in the world," they wrote, "to record past events and predict future events, was a profound intellectual achievement."

### **Writing or proto-writing?**

But is this the earliest known writing? Bacon and colleagues demur, suggesting that "it is best described as a proto-writing system, an intermediary step between a simpler notation/convention and full-blown writing." In summarizing their conclusions, Bacon and colleagues wrote that they have "proposed the existence of a notational system associated with an unambiguous animal subject relating to biologically significant events" and that this allows them "for the first time to understand a Palaeolithic notational system in its entirety."

## **SOCIO – CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY**

### **2. Capital owners: Caste hierarchies and racial discrimination affect migrant lives in Delhi; here is how**

'Properties of Rent' is about the tension between rapidly changing economic realities and parallel attempts by communities like Jats to hold on to kinship associations, as well as traditional notions of respect and honour

Have you ever wondered how rental markets, operating through bypassing municipal laws, maintain their durability in Indian cities? What shapes the landlord-renter relationship? How caste hierarchies continue to manifest themselves despite all the rhetoric of globalisation?

Sushmita Pati's *Properties of Rent* sheds light on these via a detailed ethnographic investigation of the politics of rent in two urban villages of South Delhi – Munirka and Shahpur Jat.

The book is about the tension between rapidly changing economic realities and the parallel attempts by communities to hold on to kinship associations, as well as traditional notions of respect and honour. This tension has distinctly shaped the forms of accumulation that have evolved in spaces like urban villages. Known for farming in the northwestern region of India, the Jat community is dominant in both these villages.

While presenting to her reader the post-liberalisation rental market controlled by Jats, Pati shows how global capital makes space for these messy, grey zones (in terms of law). The author has analysed how, in grey zones, rental economy operates in the shadows of global capital in ways that predate neo-liberalism. The author's central argument is that rent is not merely an economic and political category, but a lived one. Rent is about micro-processes of controlling resources, emotive expressions of belongingness, community, honour and channels to extract economic value.

The book is divided into seven chapters. The author starts by explaining the "game" being played between the government (which acquires land) and the landlords (who file court cases against the government for paying low compensation). The Jats were able to halt land acquisition and enter the informal land and rental market, whereas the common land – called *shamilat deh* – was acquired by the government from the Dalits living there.

The Jat community could maintain land ownership by claiming to be sons of the soil and erecting sticks and staves to prove their claim, thereafter building colonies and markets and manipulating local offices. Pati then delves into the history of Jats in Delhi from the 1960s onwards. How did they fall out of the construction sector and join the transport businesses in the 1980s? In the 1990s, even the transportation businesses failed, but there was a boom in real estate and financing. Wealthy landowners rejected renting as a lowly business. Rent helped those who were never entrepreneurial and had petty government and police jobs. Jats who entered the informal market for rent shaped these villages anew, with renters from all over India residing there and forming little communities of their own. For example, Munirka hosts many renters from the northeastern regions of India.



Chapters three, four and five address the central research objective directly. They ask how the rejection of neo-liberal sensibilities allow local sensibilities to shape the rental economy, which, in turn, shapes the political, economic and lived experiences of people residing in urban villages.

Landlords regularly defy bylaws and regulations to maximise rental space. Provisions for demolishing informal structures have always been there but the government never applied them in villages dominated by the Jats for it could trigger anger and hate in them.

By the 1980s, the government started changing its policy towards non-tolerance of informalities in its cities to accept them to some degree for bringing them under government control. Contrary to the government's initiatives to formalise Delhi's rental economy, Jats in urban villages have learnt the art of running a hard cash rental economy. Solidarity within the community helps it deal with the hard cash in close networks to maintain their dominance over the rental market.

Jat landlords could organise themselves into khap panchayats, *kunbas* (clan) and committees for negotiating with the state, making collective decisions at the level of the locality and managing the hierarchical order within the gentrified urban villages. All these collectives are maintained by strict adherence to patriarchy, wherein women's bodies are controlled to preserve "family" values. An older generation of Jat men who depend on the rental economy feel that even young Jat men are losing their cultural traits, identities and physical prowess.

This loss of Jat identity is blamed on the renters from different regions in India. Interactions between Jats and renters from the northeastern areas are covered extensively in the book. Young Jat boys are joining vigilante groups working on the active maintenance of differences between landlords and renters regarding their cultural traits and moral norms.

The difference in culture gives rise to the politics of purity and pollution in urban villages, where the practices of renters are understood as pollution. Pati argues that caste differences are used as an excuse to create insecurities of violence and non-tolerance of difference, in order to extract higher rent for security, tolerating alien cultural practices and ensuring non-interference by landlords. In the sixth chapter, the author returns to talk about the Dalit community after she mentions them in the first chapter.

The author notes that many Jatavs and Balmikis, doing petty jobs for the government, could become landlords. However, the Dalit community could not stop the government from acquiring land from them, even their worship places – Buddha Vihars – were not secure. In the attempt to cover the lives of all the communities who could become landlords in the selected two villages, the author did not locate the Dalit community and Buddha Vihars politically. In the context of Dalit politics being at loggerheads with the ruling governments in post-British India, the sense of power that Balmikis and Jatavs got after becoming landlords and making a place for Buddha Vihars remains unanalysed in this book.

Secular politics denies the role of caste in present-day Indian society, whereas Hindutva politics is against Dalits converting to Buddhism. At last, this book returns to the relevance of Jats in national politics, which is partly maintained by their control of the rental economy. This is why the electoral politics in urban villages of Delhi is a moment of joy and despair among Jat candidates contesting against each other to become the leaders of the community. They get party tickets to contest national elections from the money they make after winning local elections.

This book is primarily aimed at scholars of urban studies engaged in qualitative research. It is an accessible ethnographic account, written in easily understandable language.

Though it has an academic relevance in understanding the diverse functions of rent in the global capitalist economy, it lacks engagement with the changing urban policy-scape under the present regime. There is no analysis of the new working-class hostels proposed by civil societies and think tanks for Delhi. Is the push for formal and organised working class hostels a viable solution to the racial and caste discrimination in the informal rental market? What does the author have to say about the government strengthening the rights of the landlords over renters? While some important questions remain unanswered, this book does show us continuities in caste hierarchies and racial discrimination, coupled with colonial relations brought in by global capital, which affect the lives of migrants in Indian cities like Delhi.

### **3. The scientific argument for marrying outside your caste**

Community-based marriage systems remain prevalent in India despite

rapid urbanisation and the proliferation of smaller families. As India becomes more globalised, there are intense deliberations in orthodox families on the merits of getting married within their own community. The obvious go-to-market strategy is to ask for family recommendations and visit websites tailored for the community. This is typically followed by patrika and gotra matching, and some family meetings. But as our scientific understanding of diseases and other heritable attributes increases, we have to question whether continued insistence on community-based marriages is relevant.

Endogamy is the practice of marrying within the same community, and genetic diseases arising out of a limited gene pool are a major consequence of it. There is a growing need to reflect on these practices and determine what's the best way to choose a life partner. A tradition gains ground Getting married within one's community made sense through history, in times of longer commutes between villages and lack of effective communication tools. Further, our social structures have dictated community behaviours for a long time, from the way communities prepare food to the way they pray (if they choose to). It makes sense that parents prefer to get their children married within communities – it is easier to welcome a family member or send them into familiar traditions. For example, a non-vegetarian woman marrying into an orthodox vegetarian family would find her diet constrained. Attending family gatherings if you do not speak your partner's native tongue can also make you feel like an outsider.

But as India's families become more nuclear, and globalisation transcends traditions, one has to wonder if it makes sense to stick to this community-based marriage system. **Endogamy today** Community-based marriage systems remain prevalent despite rapid urbanisation and the proliferation of smaller families. They are surprisingly more prevalent among rich urban Indians than the rest of the country. The option of choosing from the community is really not wrong or unethical, but it comes today with one major caveat – genetic diseases. Centuries of endogamy have led to a limited gene pool within communities. If there is a defective gene in this gene pool, its presence gets amplified across generations. This might not necessarily lead to diseases. Inbreeding led the Habsburg royals to have peculiar jaws and also eventually led to the demise of their rule as the last king could not produce any children.

The presence of genetic mutations that lead to diseases present in a community gene pool puts future generations at heightened risk. Striking examples of such phenomena are present all around the world, from the Ashkenazi Jews predisposed to Tay-Sachs to Arya Vaisya community members who cannot break down a particular anaesthetic molecule. Interestingly, it is advised that one should not get married into one's own gotra. This system suggests some semblance of cognisance that marrying into one's family could cause adverse reactions. Yet, once a woman gets married, her gotra supposedly changes to her husband's. Under this system, one is allowed to marry their aunt's children. The changing of gotra does not mean that the woman's genes have changed, and you share an equitable gene pool across all your cousins. The custom of marrying cousins further exacerbates the impact of a decadent gene pool.

**The freedom to make an informed choice** Community-based marriages should, therefore, come with a warning (actually this is true for any marriage, but endogamy increases the risk). The children of such a marriage may be predisposed to genetic defects and diseases. For a select list of diseases, genetic tests are available to identify the likelihood of a potential child suffering from them. For example, mutations that cause thalassemia, a blood disorder, are well-known. When both the genes in a child are mutated, the child suffers from a full-blown form of the disease – thalassemia major. If only one gene is mutated, the child suffers from a milder version – thalassemia minor. Pre-checking of parental DNA for thalassemia-related mutations can predict the likelihood of the child developing thalassemia. If there is a strong likelihood, parents could choose to screen the child during pregnancy or opt for pre implantation genetic diagnosis to determine and implant a healthy child. Gene-testing is now becoming more common, with the idea of a gene “patrika” – to see whether a couple is genetically compatible – gathering ground.

However, robust scientific data only helps determine risk with regard to a limited number of diseases. There is no scientific evidence to perform genetic matches to pre-determine other attributes such as health, intelligence, etc. Genetic analysis is also not advanced enough to actually suggest matches based on compatibility. The danger with genetic testing, however, is that we have only scratched the surface of how genes work and what we can learn from studying them. The other end of the genetic compatibility spectrum is to get swayed by untested scientific claims

regarding marital compatibility and physical attributes of future children. India as a society needs our future generations to be healthy, educated and productive individuals. There is a nature and nurture component to their development – endowing them with healthy genes, bringing them up in a peaceful environment, and providing them the opportunities to learn and explore. But for that we need to give our current generations the education and freedom to make informed choices about their partners.

## PAPER - 2

### INDIAN & TRIBAL ANTHROPOLOGY

#### 4. Ikki Jathre



Recently, a Kerala-based organisation, Thanal launched the **Ikki Jathre or the Festival of Rice in tribal parlance** whereby 300 climate-resilient varieties of traditional rice were planted at Panavally, Wayanad.

- Thanal initiated the **Rice Diversity Block (RDB)** at Panavally under the **Save Our Rice campaign in 2009**, with a collection of 30 varieties of rice which now expanded to 300.

## Ikki Jathre

- The initiative aims to sensitise people to the **significance of conserving traditional crops that have the ability to withstand harsh climatic conditions.**
- The festival also sets the stage for **knowledge sharing and co-creation of knowledge** between tribal farmers and experts.
- For the RDB, **most of the varieties were collected** from Kerala, Karnataka, Assam, Tamil Nadu, Arunachal Pradesh, Maharashtra and West Bengal.
  - Also, there are **three traditional rice varieties from Vietnam and Thailand.**

## Save Our Rice Campaign

- **About:**
  - Save our rice campaign is a **people's movement to protect the diverse rice cultures**, knowledge, and ensure food sovereignty.
  - **In India, it started in 2004**, and empowers communities **build sustainable food security and livelihood.**
- **Functions:**
  - **Establishing community RDBs and seed banks, conserving and promoting indigenous varieties** of paddy seeds.
  - **Creating awareness about value of rice diversity** among urban consumers.
  - **Facilitating adoption of agro-ecological farming** in rice ecosystems, and encouraging farmers, states and local governments to adopt indigenous seeds.
  - **Enabling active discussions in the media about indigenous seeds** and agro ecological farming.

## Key Facts About Rice

- Rice is a staple food for most of the population in India.
- It is a **kharif crop** which requires **high temperature, (above 25°C)** and **high humidity** with annual rainfall above 100 cm.
  - In the **areas of less rainfall, it is grown with the help of irrigation.**
- In **southern states and West Bengal, the climatic conditions allow the cultivation of two or three crops** of rice in an agricultural year.
  - In West Bengal farmers grow three crops of rice called **'aus', 'aman' and 'boro'.**

- About **one-fourth of the total cropped area in India is under rice cultivation.**
  - **Leading Producer States:** West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, and Punjab.
  - **High Yielding States:** Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Haryana, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, West Bengal and Kerala.
- India is the **second-largest producer of rice after China.**

### 5. Wayanad rice festival promotes climate-resilient crops: Ikki Jathre



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## 6. Adivasis, Dalits, Muslims have lower life expectancy than higher-caste Hindus, study reveals



Difference among Dalits, Adivasis and higher-caste Hindus is comparable to the Black-White gap in the US

Adivasis, Dalits and Muslims are three of India's most disadvantaged groups and they have a lower life expectancy than "higher-caste" Hindus, a new study showed.

The report highlighted the impact of discrimination and social exclusion on health disparities. Adivasis have a life-expectancy over four years lower, Dalits more than three years lower and Muslims almost a year lower than that of upper-caste Hindus, according to the study.

The study published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* of the United States of America (PNAS), a peer-reviewed journal, in March 2022, is authored by experts affiliated with the Research Institute for Compassionate Economics, a non-profit organisation focused on health and well-being in India.

The relatively smaller gap between life expectancy of Muslims and higher-caste Hindus is largely due to lower exposure to open defecation among Muslim children, lower rates of cervical cancers among Muslim women, lower consumption of alcohol and fewer suicide, the report said.

The difference in life expectancy of Dalits and Adivasis in comparison to higher-caste Hindus is “comparable to the Black-White gap in the US in absolute magnitude,” the authors wrote.

The study assessed data from India’s Annual Health Survey, 2010-2011, focussing on nine states – Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand – representing 48.5 per cent of India’s population.

The impact of social exclusion as a result of one’s religion, caste or indigenous group on health and access to healthcare is an underexplored topic in low- and middle-income countries (LMIC).

“Patterns of disparities may be distinct in LMICs because population health is poorer, social safety nets are less robust, health care is less accessible and mortality risk-factors differ,” said the report. Thus, bridging the gap is essential, it added.

Life expectancy of upper-caste Hindus in the nine states was higher than the all-India life expectancy in 2010. Moreover, the same indicator for Adivasis and Dalits “are lower than those observed for all of India in 1996-2000, more than ten years before the survey.”

The study also found a marginal difference in life expectancy based on sex. Life expectancy of Adivasi men was five years lower and of Adivasi women four years lower than higher-caste Hindus, the data showed. There was no difference in life expectancy between Dalit women and men.

Among the nine states, Assam recorded the highest life expectancy for the Adivasi population, while Madhya Pradesh recorded the lowest, said the report. “The Dalit population recorded the highest life expectancy in Jharkhand and the

lowest in Uttar Pradesh. For the Muslim population, life expectancy was the highest in Rajasthan and lowest in Uttar Pradesh.

“From a policy perspective, these findings suggest that population health interventions that explicitly challenge social disadvantages are essential because addressing economic inequality may not be sufficient,” the study noted in conclusion.

## 7. ST Commission holds its ground on impact of new rules on Forest Rights Act

- There has been a growing conflict between the government and the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) over the Forest (Conservation) Rules, 2022.
- The NCST in its letter to the Ministry of Environment had highlighted various concerns with respect to the Forest (Conservation) Rules, 2022 which included concerns about the provisions that seek to do away with the mandatory consent clause for the diversion of forest land for other purposes.
- The Commission had pointed out that the removal of the clause to seek the consent of the gram sabhas before the Stage 1 clearance or even after Stage 2 clearance will facilitate the project proponents to push the State governments for “diversion at the earliest” despite having received only partial clearance.
  - According to the panel, this could impact the process of recognition of rights under the Forest Rights Act, 2006 (FRA).
- However, the Environment Minister had said that the rules were formulated based on the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 and that the NCST’s concerns of these rules being in violation of the FRA are not legally tenable.
- The Chairperson of the NCST has said that the position of the panel on the new rules will be the same even after the Environment Ministry dismissed these concerns.

## NCST

- **Formation:** NCST was set up with effect from 19th February, 2004 by amending Article 338 and by **inserting a new article 338A in the Constitution** through the **89th Constitution Amendment Act, 2003**. Hence, it is a **constitutional body**.

- **Objective:** Article 338A inter-alia gives powers to the NCST to oversee the implementation of various safeguards provided to STs under the Constitution or under any other law for time being in force or under any other order to the Government and to evaluate the working of such safeguards.
- **Composition:** It consists of a **Chairperson, a Vice-Chairperson and 3 other Members** who are appointed by the President by warrant under his hand and seal.
  - At least one member should be a woman.
  
  - The Chairperson, the Vice-Chairperson and the other Members hold office for a term of 3 years.
  - The members are not eligible for appointment for more than two terms.
- The Chairperson has been given the **rank of Union Cabinet Ministers**, the Vice Chairperson has the rank of a Minister of State and other Members have the rank of a Secretary to the Government of India.

## 8. ST commission holds its ground on the impact of new Forest (Conservation) Rules on the Forest Rights Act



The conflict between the government and the National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) over the Forest (Conservation) Rules, 2022, seems to be escalating.

#### Background:

- The Union Environment Ministry notified the Forest (Conservation) Rules, 2022, under the Forest Conservation Act, 1980, thus **replacing the Forest (Conservation) Rules, 2003**
- NCST had raised concerns about the provision in the new rules that **proposes to do away with the consent clause for the diversion of forest land for other purposes** and recommended putting these rules on hold.
- However, the government insisted that the rules were framed under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 and that the NCST's apprehension of these rules being in violation of the Forest Rights Act, 2006, **is not legally admissible**

#### The Forest (Conservation) Act (FCA), 1980

- **It regulates deforestation** by prohibiting the felling of forests for any "non-forestry" purpose

#### The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 or the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006

- It recognizes forest-dwelling tribal communities' and other traditional forest dwellers' **rights to forest resources** on

without prior approval from the central government.

- **The clearance process** includes obtaining permission from local forest rights holders as well as wildlife authorities.

- The Centre has the authority to deny such requests or to grant them with legally binding conditions.

which these communities rely for a variety of needs.

- It imposes on the **Gram Sabha** and rights holders the responsibility of biodiversity conservation and protection, by preventing any destructive practices affecting these resources.

- Under the Act, **the Gram Sabha is a highly empowered body** that allows the tribal population to have a decisive say in determining local policies and schemes that affect them.

#### **The Forest Conservation Rules, 2003**

- There are two stages of approval (**'In-Principle'** and **'Final'**, after given conditions are met) prescribed for any application by any entity to use the forest land.

- Nodal Officer → Divisional Forest Officer and the District Collector → Conservator of Forests → State Administration → MoEFCC

- **The District Collector** shall complete the process of recognition and vesting of forest rights in accordance with the provisions of the FRA (**obtain the consent of each Gram Sabha**).

#### **The Forest (Conservation) Rules, 2022**

- The Central Government can give its final approval and thereafter leave it to the state government to pass an order for de-reservation or diversion or assignment.

- It is then left to the state government now to make sure that the claims of forest dwellers are settled.

- **However, the collector is not required to obtain the consent of Gram Sabhas before the In-principle approval.**

**Concern about the new Rules:** The Gram Sabha's approval had significant persuasive power and could influence decisions to proceed with the diversion process. However, the new Rules eroded Gram Sabha's role.

## 9. Tribal Christians from Bastar villages refuse to return home following recent spate of attacks



**Observers say that the violence in Bastar is a battle over culture and the pushback to missionaries is happening in a more organised manner**

The reluctance of the families of Reshma Korram (33) and Rupji Salam (29) to return home offers a glimpse of an edgy recent past and an uncertain future.

Among the many tribal Christian families who fled from over a dozen villages in Narayanpur after they were attacked by assailants between December 16 and 18, Ms. Korram and Mr. Salam have been camping at an indoor stadium in the district headquarters when they spoke to *The Hindu* over the phone late last week. The assurances provided by the administration had little impact.

The attacks on Christians, allege affected families, were coordinated and the handiwork of fellow tribal villagers at the behest of right wing groups. They describe it as the latest chapter in the rise of violent incidents over the politically sensitive subject of religious conversions in Narayanpur, 350 km south of capital Raipur, and other districts of the Bastar region.

“We were attacked because of our faith. Since the past year-and-a-half, my family has embraced Christianity, which many in the village don’t like. When I was attacked, the village Patel (priest) was among the attackers and they asked me why was I reluctant to live harmoniously, to which I replied that I was not

harming anybody and was free to profess any faith I wished to," Mr. Salam, a farmer, said.

Observers say that the recent spate of violence in Bastar is a battle over culture and the pushback to missionaries is happening in a more organised manner. While missionaries have been preaching in the interior region for decades, a newfound tribal consciousness about identity has led to a broader resistance.

According to Manoj Pandey, a filmmaker who has been documenting the Bastar region for the past two decades, education and impact of digitisation has also led to a stronger response from fellow tribals.

"Bastar is home to tribes such as Gonds, Muria and Halba who are scattered in different pockets. On the one hand, there are those who fear that any change which a different faith brings, would lead to old customs dying and may even invite the wrath of their deities. On the other, there are many who have received education and have a newfound consciousness towards their identity and customs. Digital medium has led to better information sharing and such content also encourage backlash," says Mr. Pandey.

Pastor Sindhu Kumar Das, the Christian forum president from Kondagaon, adds that administrative apathy has also encouraged the attackers against those who assert their right to profess and practice a new religion.

"A month ago, when there was a death in one of the Christian families, they buried the deceased in their own land, but the villagers with the help of the local police exhumed the body and buried it elsewhere. Such incidents are becoming increasingly frequent," said Mr. Das, who blames the Sarva Adivasi Samaj, a group that claims to represent the various tribes in the Bastar region, for the latest "coordinated attacks" and pegs the number of victims at 400.

Prakash Thakur, the president of the Bastar division of the Sarva Adivasi Samaj, denies his group's role in the violence but admits that a conflict is raging in interior Bastar.

"We worship nature and the respective deities of our tribes which they don't. Then they do not follow the established social order, such as customs followed during birth, marriage or death. There are harvest festivals and other customs that we celebrate collectively but the proselytized ones refuse to make contributions. We are not for violence but if someone has lost their way, the onus is on us to bring them back," he says. Sources also allege that the Sarva Adivasi



Samaj is backed by Bharatiya Janata Party that has often raised the issue of conversion in the region.

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel finally broke his silence on the matter on December 23. "Met the representatives of the Christian community in Delhi today. I informed him about the developments in Bastar and the action taken by the government. No one is above the law in Chhattisgarh. Any person who spreads disharmony in the society will not be spared," he tweeted.

Arun Pannalal, president of the Chhattisgarh Christian Forum, said on Monday (December 26) when the police went to the villages to resettle the displaced Christians, other villagers blatantly refused, even if that meant going to jail. This, he says, is a sign of things to come as he makes makes little the assurances provided by the CM. He alleges that "the government is totally silent and police is taking no action. Higher officials are turning a blind eye".

"In the past four years, there have been 380 attacks on Christians. The officials have been asked by the government to turn a blind eye because it wants to corner the Hindu votes by targeting the 18 to 20 lakh Christian voters," he claims.

### **10. Gaan Ngai festival**

Recently Gaan Ngai festival was celebrated in the state of Manipur.



### Gaan Ngai festival

- It is one of the major festivals of **Manipur**.
- Full form of the festival is **Chakaan Gaan Ngai**.
  - Chakaan means **winter**; Gaan means **moonlit night**; Ngai means **festival**.
- It is celebrated **annually** following the **harvest season**, in **December-January**.
- It also marks the end of the year when the farmers have stored their foodgrain in their graneries.
- It is a festival of the **Zeliangrong community**.
  - 'Zeliangrong' is the combined name of three cognate tribes **Zeme (Zemei), Liangmai and Rongmei**.
  - Gaan-Ngai is called **Hegangi** among the Zeme, **Gin-Ngi** among the Liangmai and **Gaan-Ngai** among the Rongmei and Puimei.
- It is a festival of both the **dead and the living** in which those who died in the previous year are given **ritual farewell** or departure; their graves are beautified; dances are performed in their honour.
- It is a custom to produce new fire by **rubbing dry wood and split bamboo pieces** and distributing them to every household on the day of the festival to mark the beginning of the new year.

## 11. Expedite classification of nomadic tribes in quota lists, panel tells Centre



The Parliamentary panel on Social Justice and Empowerment has asked the centre to speed up the process to categorize 260 denotified, nomadic, and semi-nomadic tribes under either the SC/ST/OBC lists.

### Details:

- The Parliamentary panel has categorically said that:
  - The delay is increasing the suffering of potential beneficiaries.
  - It is also depriving them of welfare schemes.
  - Potential beneficiaries are unable to benefit from schemes for the welfare of SC/STs.

### Departments Response:

- Anthropological Survey of India submitted reports on the categorization of 48 DNT communities.
- More than 10 crore Indians from over **1,400 communities** are either denotified, nomadic, or semi-nomadic.
- Of this, the **Idate Commission** had categorized 1,262 communities under SC/ST/OBC lists and 267 communities were left uncategorized.
- Even the communities categorized by the Idate Commission are not accurate with many communities appearing in SC lists in one State or district and on the ST list in others.

### **Bhiku Ramji Idate Commission:**

- The DWBDNC was constituted on February 21, 2019, under the chairmanship of Bhiku Ramji Idate.
- Also, a committee has been set up by the NITI Aayog to complete the process of identification of the de-notified, nomadic, and semi-nomadic communities (DNCs).
- Ethnographic studies of DNCs are being conducted by the Anthropological Survey of India, with a budget of Rs 2.26 crore sanctioned.
- On March 30, 2022, the DoPT issued an advertisement for the recruitment of consultants in the DWBDNC.

### **What are Notified, Nomadic, and Semi-Nomadic Tribes?**

- These are communities that are the **most vulnerable and deprived**.
- DNTs are communities that were '**notified**' as being '**born criminals**' during the British regime under a series of laws starting with the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871.
  - These Acts were repealed by the Independent Indian Government in 1952, and these communities were "De-Notified".
- A few of these communities which were listed as de-notified were also nomadic.
  - Nomadic and semi-nomadic communities are defined as those who move from one place to another rather than living in one place all the time.
- Historically, Nomadic Tribes and De-notified Tribes never had access to private land or home ownership.
- While most DNTs are spread across the Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), and Other Backward Classes (OBC) categories, some DNTs are not covered in any of the SC, ST, or OBC categories.
- Many commissions and committees constituted since Independence have referred to the problems of these communities.
  - Criminal Tribes Inquiry Committee, 1947
  - Ananthasayanam Ayyangar Committee in 1949
  - Kaka Kalelkar Commission
  - B P Mandal Commission constituted in 1980
  - National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution (NCRWC), 2002

## Policy measures for DNTs

- A National Commission for De-notified, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes (NCDNT) was constituted in 2006 by the then government.
- It was headed by **Balkrishna Sidram Renke** and submitted its report in June 2008.
- It said that it is an irony that these tribes somehow escaped the attention of our Constitution makers and thus got deprived of the Constitutional support unlike SCs and STs.
- The Renke commission estimated their population at around 10.74 crore based on Census 2001.
- Much recently, the Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment launched the **Scheme for Economic Empowerment of De-notified, Nomadic, and Semi Nomadic Communities (SEED)**.
- It is important to know that, the processing the applications for the SEED scheme cannot be completed unless the State and district-level reviews are completed.

## 12. Office of Registrar-General of India following 'obsolete' criteria to define Scheduled Tribes



- According to reports, the Office of the Registrar-General of India (RGI) is following the set of criteria put in place by the Lokur Committee Report about 60 years ago to define any new communities as Scheduled Tribes (STs).
- As per the existing procedures, approval by the Office of the RGI is compulsory for the inclusion of any community on ST lists.

The criteria set out by the Lokur Committee Report for defining a community as an ST tribe include:

- Indications of primitive traits
- Distinctive culture
- Geographical isolation
- Shyness of contact with the community at large
- Backwardness.
- According to a task force on Scheduling of Tribes, set up under the leadership of the then Tribal Affairs Secretary in February 2014, the criteria put in place by the Lokur Committee “may have become obsolete considering the process of transition and acculturation”.
  - The task force also noted that terms like “primitive and the requirement of primitivity to be a characteristic of ST indicates a condescending attitude by outsiders” as what outsiders consider primitive may not be considered by the tribals themselves.

The task force recommended changes to the criteria and the Tribal Affairs Ministry in June 2014 came up with a draft Cabinet note which proposed new criteria which include:

- Socio-economic, including educational, backwardness, vis-a-vis, the rest of the population of the State
- Historical geographical isolation which may or may not exist today
- Distinct language/dialect
- Presence of a core culture relating to life-cycle, marriage, songs, dance, paintings, folklore
- Endogamy, or in case of exogamy, marital relationship primarily with other STs (This criterion is for scheduling of a community as ST and not for determining ST status of an individual)
- The draft Cabinet note also proposed, “Communities which have adopted a ‘Hindu’ way of life will not be ineligible merely on this ground.”

### 13. After Jain community, the Santhals of Jharkhand stake claim to Parasnath Hills



After the Central government assured members of the Jain community that the sanctity of their holy place, **Sammed Shikharji on Parasnath hills** in Jharkhand will conserve, the members of the **Santhal tribe** in the State have staked claim to the hill as their **Marang Buru (hill deity)**.

About

#### Details of the news:

- Recently, the **Jharkhand government** has decided to cover the Parasnath hills under Tourist spots of the state.
- After this decision, the Jain community across the country has shown discontent as the site belongs as a holy place to them.
- Following the history of the place, it is considered that the Shikharji also known as Sammed Shikharji is a pilgrimage site in **Giridih district, Jharkhand**.
- It is the most important **Jain Tirtha (pilgrimage site)** by both Digambara and Shewtambara, for it is the place where twenty of the twenty-four Jain Tirthankaras along with many other monks attained Moksha.
- However, the Santhal community in the state, the Parasnath hills are actually called Marang Buru and have clearly been mentioned in the

Gazetteer of **undivided Bihar's Hazaribagh** district in 1932, much before it became part of separate Giridih district.

### **Significance of the Parasnath Hills:**

- Parasnath Hills are a range of hills located in the Giridih district of Jharkhand. The highest peak is 1350 metres. It is one of the most important pilgrimage centres for Jains.
- It is located on Parasnath hill, the **highest mountain** in the state of Jharkhand.
- They call it Sammed Sikhar. The hill is named after Parasnath, the 23rd Tirthankara. Twenty Jain Tirthankaras attained salvation on this hill.
- For each of them, there is a shrine (gumti or tuk) on the hill.
- Some of the temples on the hill are believed to be more than 2,000 years old. However, although the place is habited from ancient times, the temples may be of more recent origin.
- The Santhals call it **Marang Buru**, the hill of the deity.
- They celebrate a hunting festival on the **full moon day in Baisakh** (mid-April).

### **The Santhal Tribes:**

- Santhal tribe is the **largest tribal community** in Jharkhand and has a sizeable population in other States **like Bihar, Odisha, Assam and West Bengal**.
- The tribe worships nature and over 40 lakh members of the community reside in Jharkhand.
- **The Santals are generally non-vegetarian and keep cattle, goats, and poultry.**
- Fishing is important whenever they have access to rivers and ponds.
- Traditionally Santals were experts in woodwork and woodcarving, and produced finely carved carts, utensils, and musical instruments, mainly for their own use.

### **What are the Constitutional Provisions related to the issue?**

- **342** of the Constitution of India, the President after consulting with the state governments concerned, has promulgated nine orders so far.
- This promulgation has clearly specified the Scheduled Tribes in relation to concerned State and Union territories. India can proudly be called the largest TRIBAL population in the world.



According to the **2001 Census, 8.2% of India's population**. This interprets into 82 million people. In all 698 Scheduled Tribes exist in India. Constitutional Provisions / Safeguards for Scheduled Tribes, can be divided into two parts:

- Protective
- Development

#### **14. Forest Rights and Heritage Conservation**

##### **What is the issue?**

1. The Scheduled Tribes (STs), and other traditional forest dwellers like Scheduled Castes (SCs) and others in Karnataka said that they weren't aware of the process that leads to the declaration of UNESCO heritage sites.
2. This reveals that the declaration of world heritage site or earlier, when protected areas were notified, did not take place in a transparent way.

##### **Story behind**

- Of the 39 areas declared by the UNESCO in 2012 as being critical for biodiversity in the Western Ghats, 10 are in Karnataka.
- **As UNESCO WHS** - Before recognising areas as world heritage sites, UNESCO seeks the opinion of the inhabitants on the implication of the possible declaration on their lives and livelihoods.
- But it has been found that the traditional forest dwellers of Karnataka near the potential UNESCO heritage sites were unknown about that.
- **Under FRA** - The Forest Rights Act (FRA) says that the claims of the forest dwellers must be less than the ceiling of 4 hectares permitted.
- Majority of the forest dwellers claimed land measuring not more than one acre.
- Rejection rate of the other traditional forest dwellers was two times more than the STs.

### Reasons quoted for rejections

- In the case of the STs, the reasons were attributed to
  - fresh encroachments;
  - the claimants not living on the lands claimed;
  - claimed lands being on ' *paisari bhoomis*' (wasteland and forest lands which have not been notified as protected forests or reserved forests) or revenue lands; and
  - multiple applications made in a single family.
- In the case of other traditional forest dwellers, it was mainly failure to produce evidence of dependency and dwelling on forest land for 75 years.
- The FRA recognizes the rights of the STs because of their overall backwardness. But, most people felt there should be a closure to this Act.

### Restrictions

- The people in the villages falling under eco-sensitive zones are experiencing severe restrictions on their entry into the forest.
- Following the stringent implementation of rules in the 'protected areas', there is a decrease in illegal tree-felling and poaching.
- Farming is not allowed in a normal way, a slight sound is demurred, the use of fertilizers is banned, and even a small knife is not allowed to be carried into the forest.
- Development activities like road repair has been stopped.
- But these restrictions were in enforcement from the time these areas were declared as protected areas and not necessarily after their declaration as world heritage sites.

### What problems do these restrictions cause?

- The increasing animal insurgency is causing damage to the crops of the farming forest dwellers.
- Those who don't have recognition over their lands aren't compensated for the loss.
- Monkeys and snakes released from urban settings into the forests enter their houses.
- Owning livestock in the villages close to forests is more challenging than in regular revenue villages.

- In the areas where irrigation projects have come up, the people reported that grazing lands have been taken over by the government to compensate for the forest land lost to such projects.

### **Current status**

### **Deprivation of basics**

- Most forest dwellers were still deprived of basic facilities and other government benefits extended under various schemes and programmes.
- This is because they don't possess the 'Records of Rights, Tenancy and Crops' that is required along with the title of the land.
- The government must address this issue in consonance with the rules of the Act.

### **Accepting the resettlement or not**

- The people were in possession of the lands claimed under the FRA even though their applications were either rejected or were still pending.
- However, in many places, people were accepting the resettlement packages and moving out of 'protected areas' for good.
- They worried that if half the village population moved away, it would become difficult for the remaining ones to live their normal life.
- People refuse to re-locate on grounds of their attachment to the land fearing extinction of their culture and religious roots.

### **Gram Sabha's power**

- The Gram Sabha appears supreme in the Act in deciding the 'proposed resettlement' as it has to give 'free informed consent'.
- However, this does not happen.
- Hence, the government must bring more clarity to the Act to avoid conflicts between the government agencies conserving biodiversity and the people living in the forest for over decades and centuries.

### **What is needed?**

- The conservation of biodiversity requires special attention. Yet, forest dwellers willing to live in the forest must be allowed to stay.

- Many of them comply with the norms of the eco-sensitive zone because they do not depend on modern development needs such as the use of fertilizers and mobile phones.
- In the same breath, those wanting to experience the fruits of development must be relocated according to their choice of a new place and a suitable package.
- This can be possible only when the areas declared as 'protected' are arrived at after consultations with the local population.

### 15. Polygyny highest among scheduled tribes: NFHS 2019-20



**The percentage of polygyny is higher in tribal populations, which increases the percentage of polygyny for those states which have a greater tribal population, such as Meghalaya (6.1%) & Tripura (2%)**

According to the latest National Family Health Survey (NFHS) data 2019-20, polygyny (the practice of having more than one wife at a time), though overall reducing, is being noticed in many communities in the country, even though it is legal only for Muslims.

Times of India reported that the prevalence for polygyny among communities stood at-

While the report stated, "In 1955, the Hindu Marriage Act of India prohibited the practice of polygyny. Although India has banned polygyny among Hindus, this practice still exists among some sections of the Hindus and the personal law of Muslims allows such practice."

But data from the report still showed that polygyny among Hindus increased in four states from 2005-06 to 2015-16 and again from 2015-16 to 2019-20 in four different states.

The International Institute of Population Studies in Mumbai did a comparison study on polygyny in the years 2005-06, 2015-16 and 2019-20, stating, "Overall, polygynous marriage was found to be higher among poor, uneducated, rural and older women. It indicated that socio-economic factors also played a role in this form of marriage in addition to region and religion."

The percentage of polygyny is higher in tribal populations, which increases the percentage of polygyny for those states which have a greater tribal population, such as Meghalaya (6.1%) and Tripura (2%). The report said, "Among the districts, the prevalence was high in East Jantia Hills (20%), Kra Daadi (16.4%), West Jaintia Hills (14.5%), and West Khasi Hills (10.9%)."

But it's not just those states, since Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, and West Bengal also have higher percentages of polygyny than north Indian states.

There are exceptions too. In states like Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Tamil Nadu, polygyny is more prevalent in Hindus than in Muslims. TOI said, "no single background characteristic could be attributed as the reason for higher prevalence of polygyny."

According to TOI, the survey showed that Christians had a high polygyny rate, which can be attributed to polygyny being common in Northeastern states.

While the survey found that polygyny was more common in poorer families where the women were uneducated and mostly aged over 35, polygyny was also common in places where the literacy rate was high.

According to the report by the International Institute of Population Studies, polygyny takes place for various reasons- "excess mortality of men than women, desire to have children to continue the family line, failure to produce children/son by first wife, the cultural practices of lengthy periods of sexual abstinence after child birth driving the men to seek another partner, etc". For this

research, married women between the ages of 15-49 were asked if their husband had another wife.

### 16. Plan for the financial inclusion of the Tharu tribe by forest officials of Katarniaghat division



Recently forest officials of Katarniaghat division says it has plan for the financial inclusion of the Tharu people that live near the Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary (KWS).

#### **Katarniaghat Wildlife Sanctuary (KWS):**

- The Sanctuary is a protected area in the **Upper Gangetic plain in Uttar Pradesh.**
- It was brought under the purview of the '**Project Tiger**' in 1987.
- KWS with the **Kishanpur Wildlife Sanctuary** and the **Dudhwa National Park** it forms the **Dudhwa Tiger Reserve, which was established in 1975.**
- Katarniaghat Forest provides strategic connectivity between tiger habitats of **Dudhwa and Kishanpur** in India and the **Bardia National Park (Nepal).**
- The **Gairwa river** flows in the sanctuary area is declared as a **sanctuary for Mugger and Gharials.**
- **Fauna:** Endangered species including, **tiger, rhino, swamp deer, hispid hare, Bengal florican, the white-backed and long-billed vultures.**

- It is among the few places in India where Gangetic dolphins (fresh water dolphins) are found in their natural habitat.
- **Flora:** Its fragile Terai ecosystem comprises a **mosaic of sal and teak forests, lush grasslands, numerous swamps and wetlands.**

#### **About Tharu People/tribe:**

- The word Tharu is believed to be derived from sthavir, meaning **followers of Theravada Buddhism.**
- Community belongs to **the Terai lowlands, amid the Shivaliks or lower Himalayas** in India and Nepal.
- They live mostly in **Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar** in Indian terai region.
- They speak various dialects of Tharu, a language of the **Indo-Aryan subgroup, and variants of Hindi, Urdu, and Awadhi.**
- In central Nepal, they speak a variant of **Bhojpuri, while in eastern Nepal, they speak a variant of Maithili.**
- Tribe worship **Lord Shiva as Mahadev**, and call their **supreme being "Narayan"**.
- They believe **"Narayan" is the provider of sunshine, rain, and harvests.**
- Tharu women have stronger property rights than is allowed to women in mainstream North Indian Hindu custom.

#### **17. Tribes in news: Santhal Tribe**

The Santhal community is in the spotlight after a political alliance nominated one of its leaders for the Presidential election, Droupadi Murmu, for the election to the highest Constitutional post of India.

#### **Santhal Tribe**

- Santhal, also spelt as Santal, literally means a calm, peaceful man. Santha means calm, and ala means man in the Santhali (also spelt as Santali) language.
- Santhals are the third largest Scheduled Tribe community in India after Gonds and Bhils.
- The Santhali population is mostly distributed in Jharkhand, Odisha and West Bengal.

## Historical background

- The Santhals were a nomadic stock before they chose to settle in the Chotanagpur plateau.
- By the end of the 18th century, they had concentrated in the Santhal Parganas of Jharkhand (earlier Bihar).
- From there, they migrated to Odisha and West Bengal.

## Demographic details

- Tribal communities, outside the Northeast, generally have lower levels of literacy.
- But the Santhals have higher – a result of a pro-school education awareness since at least the 1960s – literacy rate compared to other tribes in Odisha, Jharkhand and West Bengal.
- Many of the community have entered the creamy layer of Indian society.
- For example, Jharkhand CM Hemant Soren is a Santhal.
- The incumbent Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAGI) Girsh Chandra Murmu, who was the first Lt Governor of the UT of Jammu and Kashmir, is also a Santhal.

## Cultural features of Santhals

### (1) Religion

- Despite their social upliftment, the Santhals are usually connected to their roots.
- They are nature worshippers and could be seen paying obeisance at Jaher (sacred groves) in their villages.
- River Damodar holds a special place in the religious life cycle of a Santhal.
- When a Santhal dies, his or her ashes and bones are immersed in the Damodar for a peaceful afterlife.
- Their traditional dress includes dhoti and gamuchha for men and a short-check saree, usually blue and green, for women, who generally put on tattoos.

### (2) Society

- Various forms of marriage are accepted in the Santhal society – including elopement, widow remarriage, levirate, forced (rare) and the one in which a man is made to marry the woman he has impregnated.



- Divorce is not a taboo in the Santhal society. Either of the couple could divorce the other.

### (3) Artforms

- Santhals are fond of their folk song and dance that they perform at all community events and celebrations.
- They play musical instruments like kamak, dhol, sarangi and flutes.
- Most Santhals are agriculturists, depending on their farmlands or forests.
- Their homes, called Olah, have a particular three-colour pattern on the outer walls.
- The bottom portion is painted with black soil, the middle with white and the upper with red.

### (4) Language

- Their tribal language is called Santhali, which is written in a script called Ol chiki, developed by Santhal scholar Pandit Raghunath Murmu.
- Santhali language belongs to the Munda group.
- Santhali written in Ol-Chiki script is recognised as one of the scheduled languages in the Eighth Schedule to the Constitution.

## 18. 400 tribal youth from three Maoist-affected Chattisgarh districts to join CRPF by March



The special recruitment was made possible by relaxing the minimum education qualification to Class VIII from Class X

**Tribal youth to join CRPF:** The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) has completed the recruitment process of **400 tribal youth** from **three worst Left Wing Extremism (LWE)**-affected districts in Chattisgarh.

#### Key Takeaway:

The new recruits from the districts of **Sukma, Bijapur, and Dantewada** will join basic CRPF training in March.

#### Tribal youth in CRPF:

- **Qualifications:**
  - **Minimum educational qualification** will be relaxed from **Class 10 to Class 8** for the recruitment of 400 candidates from the districts.
  - The services of the **recruits will only be confirmed** after they acquire the **minimum educational qualification** of **Class X**, for which CRPF will help them register with the **National Institute of Open Schools** recognised by the Central or State government.
  - Along with the formal education, study material, books and coaching assistance during the probation period will also be provided to candidates by the CRPF, but the decision on the serving of the candidates will only be confirmed after they achieve the **Class 10 qualification through CRPF's training**.
- **Applications for the advertised post:**
  - Thousands applied for the advertised post of **Constable (General Duty)**
  - The identity of the candidates is finalised for the posts and is under wraps due to **security reasons**.
  - The families of many candidates have received **threats from Maoist** cadres warning them from joining the force.
- **Earlier Recruitments:**
  - This is not the first time such a special recruitment drive was launched in the **LWE-affected districts**.
  - CRPF during 2016-2017 had raised one **Bastariya Battalion** by recruiting **744 Scheduled Tribe (ST)** candidates from four districts, namely, **Bijapur, Dantewada, Narayanpur and Sukma of Chhattisgarh**.

- Unfortunately, many positions remained vacant as the tribal youth from interior locations of the four districts could **not meet the educational requirement criteria.**

### **The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF):**

- **About:**
  - The Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) is one of the **premier Central Armed Police Forces** of India under the **Ministry of Home Affairs** for **internal security.**
  - The **other Central Armed Police Forces** are as follow:
    - **Assam Rifles (AR):** The Assam Rifles came into being in 1835, as a militia called the 'Cachar Levy'.
    - **Border Security Force (BSF):** Responsible for guarding India's land borders with Pakistan and Bangladesh.
    - **Central Industrial Security Force (CISF):** Provides security cover to nuclear installations, space establishments, airports, seaports, power plants, sensitive Government buildings and heritage monuments.
    - **Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP):** ITBP is a specialised mountain force, and most officers and men are professionally trained mountaineers and skiers.
    - **National Security Guard (NSG):** The National Security Guard (NSG) is a counter-terrorism unit raised in 1984 following Operation Blue Star.
    - **Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB):** Earlier Special Service Bureau was raised in the 1960s with the sole objective of achieving 'Total security preparedness' in the remote border areas for performing a 'stay-behind' role in the event of a war.
- **Objective:**
  - To enable the government to maintain the **Rule of Law, Public Order and Internal Security effectively and efficiently.**
  - To Preserve **National Integrity and Promote Social Harmony** and Development by upholding the **supremacy of the Constitution.**

## 19. Bakerwals, Gujjars Of Jammu & Kashmir Pad Up To Protect Rights



In 1991, Jammu and Kashmir recognised Bakerwals as a Scheduled Tribe along with the larger community of Gujjars. This provides them with a 10 percent reservation in government educational institutions and jobs.

Mohammad Yousuf Poor's house is the last one in Ringazabal village on the banks of Sukhnag river, a major tributary of Jhelum. Beyond his house is the vast forest of the Pir Panjal Range of the Himalayas. Poor, now in his seventies, fell in love with the village, about 195 km from Rajouri district of Jammu. Ringazabal is around 55 km from Srinagar, in 1971. Then, there were only forests all around it and a few traditional one-room mud houses called dhoks.

"I told my father that I wanted to live in this village," says Poor. "My father told me that Bakerwals do not live in one place."

Bakerwals are a nomadic community that lives in Jammu and Kashmir in India and also parts of Afghanistan. They are spread over the Pir Panjal range and the Hindukush as well as Ladakh. They are usually goatherds and shepherds, and migrate seasonally from one place to another.

My father, Sain Poor, was our guiding light," says Poor. "He would tell us when to move with our livestock, where to halt, and where to stay." The Poor family hails from the Kotranka area of Rajouri district in Jammu. Poor recalls that every

year Sain and his five sons would trek to the Sukhnag jungles for about 40-45 days. Thousands of other Bakerwals also made this journey.

In 1991, Jammu and Kashmir recognised Bakerwals as a Scheduled Tribe along with the larger community of Gujjars. This provides them with a 10 percent reservation in government educational institutions and jobs. Besides, the Delimitation Commission in May this year recommended that nine seats out of 90 in the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly be reserved for Scheduled Tribes (ST).

However, the Bakerwals as well as the Gujjars are not happy with the Centre's announcement in October that it was also planning to grant ST status to the Pahari community in the state. Many Bakerwals and Gujjars fear that this might dilute the opportunities they can now access, and they are planning an agitation to prevent this.

### **Navigating nomadism**

In her book *The Bakkarwals of Jammu and Kashmir: Navigating Through Nomadism* (2009), sociologist Anita Sharma writes: "The pastoral Bakkarwals of Jammu and Kashmir herd goat and sheep and are a subset of the buffalo-herding Gujjars of the state. They migrate and return annually from the hills of the Jammu-Poonch region through... Pir Panjal into the Valley, to beyond the tree line atop the highland pastures of the Greater Himalayas." Bakkarwal is another way of referring to the community.

Poor is among the few in the community who decided to settle down. His father helped him financially. "I thought if I ever live anywhere I will live here," he says. "It is close to the jungle, the river. You can see the whole valley from here." Finally in 1981 that he settled in the village after getting married. It is a decision he has never regretted.

His brother would come every summer with livestock from Rajouri. Poor would join them with his flock of 40 sheep on the upper reaches of the mountain. They would stay at their mud houses. Over the seven decades of his life, Poor claims to have walked thousands of kilometres.

However, younger generations are unlikely to follow the nomadic lifestyle. In Ringazabal and neighbouring villages, many Bakerwals and Gujjars are settling down, choosing other professions, and admitting their children to English-medium schools. Poors's son Mohammed Gafoor has become a construction

labourer and admitted his son to a school in Chadoora, a municipal town in Budgam district.

“My son did not want to rear livestock,” says Poor. “With livestock, you are always on the move. If they get diseases and die, you will have a miserable life. I think he has taken a good decision.” Poor adds that he wanted all his four children to study and get government jobs. “But getting them educated was beyond my means,” he says.

This year, Poor has not found much work except feeding his livestock. Across the river is Raiyar, another village. That’s where he goes to get grass from Kashmiri farmers. A visit to the village gives a glimpse of what the future might hold for the community.

Hundreds of tourists visit Raiyar every year on their way to Doodhpathri, a famous tourist destination. Their influx has changed the lives of the villages, many of whom have set up small tea stalls to serve traditional Kashmiri kawha. Some have become tourist guides, and others have turned their houses into homestays. “The children on Raiyar are going to English medium schools,” says Poor. “I want the same for our village.”

Poor’s neighbour, Bashir Ahmad Poswal, a Gujjar, agrees. “If the government constructed a proper road to our village and promoted Sukhnag as a tourist destination, our fates will change. There is no grass in the forest and most of the trees have been felled. Now, only tourism can stop wood smuggling and provide an alternative livelihood for our people.”

Poswal says economic stability might also improve the lives of his children. “I don’t want them to have the kind of hard life that I have had,” he says. Like Poor, he is worried that extending reservations to other communities might dilute the opportunities.

### **Demand for Rights**

Gujjars and Bakerwals have joined forces under the Gujjar-Bakerwal Joint Action Committee to protest against other communities being recognised as ST in Kashmir. They have begun a protest march, Tribal Bachao March, on November 4 at Kupwara in Kashmir. It will travel through 20 districts, culminating in Kathua in Jammu – a distance of about 500 km.

“While Gujjars comprise 19 percent of Jammu and Kashmir’s population, the literacy rate is only 2 percent,” says Gujjar leader Talib Hussain. “I doubt this figure as well. Bakerwals are always on the move and they are hardly considered in the surveys.”

Hussain says a new generation of Gujjar youth is trying to spread awareness about the need for education in the community, where many are not even aware of the reservation. “But the government’s decision to include everyone in the reservation will finish off the Gujjar tribe forever. How can the tribals compete with elite Brahmin Hindus and Peers of Kashmir?” he adds.

“All Bakerwals in spite of the ST remained backward as they were always on the move and busy with their livestock. The stationary Gujjars in Jammu didn’t get any benefit from the reservation. It is now when we started sending our children to schools they brought elites into the reservation fold,” says Hussain. “I belong to the Bakerwal family. My parents have died rearing sheep and goats. If I have got an education, it is because of the reservation. Had there been no reservation I wouldn’t have joined college and the university.”

Poor and Poswal at Ringzabal also have the same concerns. “I decided to leave the nomadic life and get my grandchildren educated,” says Poor. “Now they are in schools. But I worry they cannot compete with the rich. It seems the government wants us to be nomads forever.”

## 20. Banjaras and Hakku Patra



Recently Prime Minister of India symbolically distributed Hakku Patra (land title deeds) to five families of the Banjara (Lambani) community, a nomadic Scheduled Caste group in Karnataka.

### About Banjaras:

- The Banjaras are a **key scheduled caste sub-group in Karnataka**, although they are considered to be a **tribal group in terms of the lives they lead**.
- The **Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes** together make up **nearly 24 per cent of the state population**.
- The Banjaras are a historically nomadic trading caste who may have **origins in the Mewar region of what is now Rajasthan**.
- **Fire dance, 'Ghumar' dance and Chari dance** are the traditional dance forms of the Banjaras.
- Banjaras have a **sister community of singers known as Dadhis or Gajugonia**.
- They are traditionally travelled from **village to village singing songs to the accompaniment of sarangi**.
- The Banjaras community has been listed as a Scheduled Tribe in the states of: **Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Odisha**.



- They were designated as an Other Backward Class in: **Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Rajasthan.**
- They were designated as a Scheduled Caste in: **Karnataka, Delhi and Punjab.**

#### About Hakku Patras or title deeds:

- A title deed is a **property ownership document**, and the bearer of the document owns the land.
- The title deeds enable owners to avail of bank loans with the said document.
- They will also be **eligible to buy or sell land** to which the title deed is granted by the government.

#### 21. Why Jammu And Kashmir Nomads Are On A 500-km March



They call it the 'Tribal Bachhao' march (Save Tribals march) as Bakerwal and Gujjar tribals fear that the government's move to include upper castes in the scheduled tribe category will deprive them of their rights.

In Jammu and Kashmir, it's an unusual sight of nomads marching on roads without their herds. They are carrying placards and banners, shouting slogans for the protection of their identity and rights under the scheduled tribe status.

They call it the 'Tribal Bachao' march (Save Tribals march) as Gujjar-Bakerwal tribals fear that the government's move to include upper castes in the scheduled tribe category will deprive them of their rights in education and jobs.

They are also fearful that the inclusion of new groups may dilute their distinct identity.

At the onset of a harsh winter in Kashmir, nomads whose livelihood is rearing livestock have just completed their seasonal migration from the upper reaches of Kashmir Valley to the plains of Jammu. But many of them are back in the Valley despite heavy snowfall and cold conditions in the region.

Nomad activists have started a 500-km-long march from Kupwara to Kathua covering all 20 districts of Jammu and Kashmir. They are visiting tribal villages, apprising people about the inclusion of upper castes as scheduled tribes and how it is going to impact their future.

The Gujjar-Bakerwal community continues to remain behind in education and other social indicators compared to other communities including scheduled castes and OBCs.

Under the ST status, the Gujjar-Bakerwals are getting 10% reservation in education and government jobs besides nine reserved seats in the Jammu and Kashmir Assembly.

The government's move to include Pahari-speaking people and other upper caste groups like Gadda Brahmins in the ST category has made them feel insecure.

After recommendations by a commission to grant ST status to Pahari-speaking people, Kohlis and Gadda Brahmins, the Jammu and Kashmir administration has reclassified "Pahari-speaking people" as "Pahari ethnic group" to pave way for their inclusion in the ST category. The reclassification will avoid any legal hurdles since no reservation can be given on linguistic grounds.

The Gujjar-Bakerwal tribals say even if the government increases the ST quota from the current 10% after including upper castes in the reserved category, they just cannot compete with them and eventually will be left out of education and jobs. This also means nine Assembly seats reserved for Gujjars and Bakerwals will no longer remain as their exclusive domain.

"It's an assault on a community that is historically marginalised. It was because of reservation that some of us were able to get an education and jobs. Now it appears they are taking it away after including upper castes in ST category," said Guftar Ahmad, a Gujjar activist.

As per the 2011 census, there are more than 12 lakh Gujjar-Bakerwals living in Jammu and Kashmir. A large section of the two communities herd buffalos, goats, and sheep. They are often on the move from one grassland to another for grazing.

The government has opened mobile schools for nomad children. About 40,000 tribal students are enrolled in these seasonal schools even as critics say many such schools exist only on paper.

Tribals say that given their background, how can their children who are getting an education while grazing cattle can compete with upper caste people if they are included in the ST category?

Guftar Ahmad, who was part of a Gujjar-Bakerwal delegation, met with Union Home Minister Amit Shah during his recent visit to the state. Mr Ahmed said that the union minister assured the delegation that their rights will be protected. But at the same time, Mr Shah announced ST status for Paharis and other groups.

"How can they give scheduled tribe status to upper castes on the basis of their language?" asked Mr Ahmad as he led a march in Ganderbal district.

Ahead of possible assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir, ST status to Paharis and other groups is seen as a major political move by the Bharatiya Janata Party to win maximum seats in the state. The region was stripped of statehood and special status in 2019 and remains without an elected government for more than four years.

## 22. Arunachal Pradesh to cancel ST certificates of children born to tribal women married to non-tribal partners



**The announcement came during the ongoing session of the state Assembly, when Arunachal Pradesh Minister for Social Justice, Empowerment and Tribal Affairs Alo Libang replied to a question moved by Congress MLA Lombo Tayeng.**

The Arunachal Pradesh government will cancel all Scheduled Tribe certificates earlier issued to offsprings of tribal women married to non-tribals after screening of the cases by a committee, a state minister said in the assembly on Tuesday.

Responding to a question by senior Congress MLA Lombo Tayeng, Social Justice, Empowerment, and Tribal Affairs (SJETA) Minister Alo Libang said the government had notified the 'Arunachal Pradesh Schedule tribe Certificate Issuance guidelines on August 1 last, which has provisions for cancellation, impounding, or revocation of ST certificates issued to ineligible persons.

Under the guidelines, if the authority issuing the document is satisfied that an ST certificate has been obtained by any person by furnishing false information or by misrepresenting any fact, or suppressing any material information, it may cancel,

impound or revoke the certificate, Libang said.

So far nine disputed cases of issuance of ST certificates have been placed before the scrutiny committee, which had disposed of five cases. "Out of the remaining four, one pertains to issuance of ST certificate allegedly in respect of an offspring of a tribal woman married to a non-tribal. The hearing of these cases is under process," the minister said.

The deputy commissioners concerned have been accordingly directed to give their comments after which the committee would take appropriate decisions. Responding to a supplementary by Tayeng for fixing a cut-off year for cancellation of ST certificates, Libang assured the legislators that the matter would be discussed with all the members of the House. The ST certificate issue has rocked the state in recent times with many organisations including the All Arunachal Pradesh Students' Union (AAPSU) staging protests in various parts of the state.

### **23. Former Civil Servants Ask President to Halt 'Undesirable Development' of Great Nicobar Island**



They said that the project will "destroy one of the most pristine habitats in the country, one which is home to various rare and endemic species, as well as to an extremely vulnerable tribe, the Shompens of Great Nicobar". A group of 87 former civil servants have written to President Droupadi Murmu, asking her to

advise the government to “immediately stop the commencement of destructive projects” in Great Nicobar Island.

There are plans for a massive development project on the island, including an international container transshipment terminal, a large green field international airport, a township, and a solar and gas-based power plant to be set up over 16,610 hectares. This will “destroy one of the most pristine habitats in the country, one which is home to various rare and endemic species, as well as to an extremely vulnerable tribe, the Shompens of Great Nicobar”, the former civil servants, under the Constitutional Conduct Group, said.

They added that the idea of replacing the “virgin forests of Great Nicobar with planted forests in Haryana would be laughable if it weren’t so tragic: 13075 acres of rich, evergreen, rain forests teeming with extraordinary flora and fauna species to be compensated with newly planted trees in the dry Aravalli hills of Haryana”. The civil servants said that the change in the climate of India is palpable: “unbelievably hot temperatures in summer, erratic rainfall, repeated cyclones, mild winters in most of the country but sharp falls in temperature in the north, should also have sent alarm signals to the government”. They also said that the subsidence of land in Joshimath is a “glaring indication of the damage that unthinking development can do to the country”.

We earnestly request you to advise your government to immediately stop the commencement of destructive projects in Great Nicobar,” they told the president. The Shompen tribe is a unique indigenous group that inhabits the Great Nicobar Island, Andaman and Nicobar Islands. They are considered to be a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG), a term used to refer to ethnic groups that are socially and educationally disadvantaged. The Shompen are known for their unique culture, society, and language.

One of the most fascinating aspects of the Shompen culture is their traditional attire. Men of the Shompen tribe traditionally wear a minimalistic loincloth made of bark cloth, covering only the genitals, without any additional cloth in front. Their attire is simple and decorated only with bead necklaces and armbands. Women, on the other hand, wear a knee-length skirt made of bark cloth and sometimes adorn themselves with

shawl of the same material, bamboo ear plugs, bead necklaces and armbands.

This traditional attire showcases the simplicity and minimalist lifestyle of the Shompen tribe. The Shompen people are primarily hunter-gatherers and subsist on hunting wild game such as pigs, birds, and small animals while foraging for fruits and forest foods. In addition to hunting and foraging for food, the Shompen people also keep pigs and engage in small scale farming of yams, roots, vegetables, and tobacco. This subsistence economy is a reflection of their close relationship with nature and their reliance on the resources provided by their environment.

The Shompen language is considered to be a distinct language, and it is not related to any other language in the region. It is a language isolate, which means that it is not known to be related to any other language. The language is not well-documented, and it is not known how many people speak it. However, the fact that they have their own unique language highlights the distinctiveness of the Shompen tribe.

In conclusion, the Shompen tribe is a unique indigenous group that inhabits the Great Nicobar Island. They have a unique culture, society, and language that have been largely protected from outside influences due to their isolated way of life. However, the population of the Shompen is small and there is very little information available about them. Therefore, further research on the Shompen is needed to understand their culture and way of life. The simplicity of their attire, their subsistence economy, and their unique language are all characteristics that make them an interesting group to study and appreciate.

#### **24. Chin-Kuki-Mizo refugees pour into Mizoram: What's the new armed conflict in Bangladesh's Chittagong Hill Tracts?**

The tribal population of the Chittagong Hill Tracts in southern Bangladesh has ethnic links with tribal populations in the adjacent areas of India, mainly in Mizoram.

At least 274 Bangladeshi tribal nationals entered Lawngtlai district in Mizoram this week, trying to flee fighting between Bangladeshi security forces and the

Kuki-Chin National Army (KNA), an armed insurgent group that is active in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT).



A meeting of the Mizoram Cabinet chaired by Chief Minister Zoramthanga on Tuesday (November 22) expressed sympathy for the refugees, who belong to the Chin-Kuki-Mizo communities, and resolved to give “temporary shelter, food and other relief as per convenience of the state government”, a PTI report from Aizawl said, quoting Home Minister Lalchamlia.

#### The refugee problem in Mizoram

The CHT is an impoverished hilly, forested area that sprawls over more than 13,000 sq km of the Khagrachari, Rangamati, and Bandarban districts of southeastern Bangladesh, bordering Mizoram to the east, Tripura to the north, and Myanmar to the south and southeast. A significant portion of the population is tribal, and culturally and ethnically different from the majority Muslim Bangladeshis who live in the country’s deltaic mainland.





The tribal population of the CHT has ethnic links with tribal populations in the adjacent areas of India, mainly in Mizoram. Mizoram shares a 318-km-long border with Bangladesh.

A government official told The Indian Express that “some people of the tribal communities [had] entered India”, and that “some villagers of the area (Indian side), who hail from similar communities, provided them accommodation”. Humanitarian aid was being extended to the refugees “through NGOs, village committees, civil societies and the BSF, which is looking after their safety and security”, the official said.

Some of the refugees who entered India this week are unaccompanied children, the PTI report said.

Mizoram is already playing host to about 30,000 refugees who have been fleeing fighting in Myanmar’s Chin state since around July-August 2021. A pro-democracy civilian resistance group called the Chin Defence Force – which is backed and trained by the Chin National Army (CNA), an ethnic armed organisation active in Myanmar – has been fighting the forces of the junta ever since the military coup of February 2021.

The government of Chief Minister Zoramthanga – whose Mizo National Front is a constituent of the NDA – has openly differed with the Centre on

the issue of refugees. India is not a signatory to the 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention or its 1962 Protocol, and does not have a domestic policy on refugees. When people began pouring in from Myanmar's Chin State, the Union Home Ministry asked states in the Northeastern region to act against "the illegal influx". Zoramthanga declared solidarity with the people of Myanmar, and has continued to welcome the refugees. Their increasing numbers have, however, put strain on the state's resources, and several NGOs, the church, and youth organisations have joined the effort. The Centre has so far not prevented the Mizoram government from helping the refugees.

### The complex conflict in the CHT

The KNA, which is fighting soldiers of the Bangladesh Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) in the CHT, is the armed wing of the Kuki-Chin National Front (KNF), an ethnic separatist organisation that claims to represent the interests of the Kuki-Chin-Mizo communities living in the area. The KNF emerged around 2008, with the demand of a separate state in the CHT. The KNF claims all members of the Bawm, Pungkhua, Lushai, Khumi, Mro, and Khyang ethnic groups belong to a greater Kuki-Chin race.

Bangladeshi media reported last month that the RAB had arrested three members of the KNF along with seven members of a newly-founded militant outfit called the Jama'atul Ansar Fil Hindal Sharqiya from the remote hilly areas of Rangamati and Bandarban.

"The elite force also seized nine SBBL guns, 50 bullets, 62 cartridge cases for SBBL guns, six improvised explosive devices (IEDs), two cartridge belts, a locally made pistol, a walkie-talkie and 10 maps of the proposed Kuki-Chin State," The Daily Star reported, quoting from a news conference addressed by Khandaker Al Moin, director of the RAB's Legal and Media Wing in Bandarban on October 21.

The report quoted Al Moin as saying that the amir of the Jama'atul Ansar, Md Anisur Rahman alias Mahmud, had "developed a good relationship with KNF chief Nathan Bom in late 2020", and that they had "struck a three-year agreement" at the beginning of 2021. "As per the deal, the KNF was providing shelter, training and other support to the militants. In return, the militant outfit was giving the KNF Bangladeshi Taka 3 lakh per month and the expenditure for food," The Daily Star report said, quoting Al Moin.

Meanwhile, the PTI report from Aizawl said that the Zo Reunification Organisation (ZORO), a Mizoram-based association fighting for the reunification of Chin-Kuki-Mizo tribes of India, Myanmar and Bangladesh, had last week told a press conference that the Bangladesh Army has “entered into a secret pact with Myanmar-based Arakan Army to launch joint operations against KNA”, which had long been seeking a separate state for the community.