



Demand of Meities for ST Status

For Prelims: [Meitei Community](#), [Scheduled Tribe](#), National Commission for Scheduled Tribes, [SC](#), [OBC](#), Any Kuki and Naga Tribes.

For Mains: Demand of Meities for ST Status. Special Provisions under 371.

Why in News?

Recently, the **All-Tribal Students' Union of Manipur (ATSUM)** has carried out a solidarity march in order to oppose the demand of [Meitei Community](#) be included in the **List of State's Scheduled Tribes (ST)**.

- The march broke into **violent clashes after an order from the Manipur High Court**, directing the State to pursue a 10-year-old recommendation to grant ST status to the **non-tribal Meitei community**.

Why does the Meitei Community want ST Status?

- The Meitei community, led by the **Scheduled Tribes Demand Committee of Manipur (STDCM)**, has been demanding ST status since 2012, asking to provide them with **constitutional safeguards to preserve their culture, language, and identity**.
- The Meiteis argue that they were **recognised as a tribe before the merger of Manipur with India in 1949** but lost their identity after the merger in India.
- As a result of being left out of the ST list, the Meitei community **feels marginalized and victimized** without any constitutional protections.
 - The STDCM has stated that the Meitein/Meetei have been gradually marginalised in their ancestral land.
 - Their population, which was **59% of the total population of Manipur in 1951**, has now been reduced to **44% as per 2011 Census** data.
- They believe that **granting ST status would help preserve their ancestral land, tradition, culture, and language**, and safeguard them against outsiders.

What is the Process of Inclusion under List of STs?

- The process for including a community in the **list of ST follows a set of modalities established in 1999**.
- The respective State or Union Territory government must initiate the proposal for inclusion, which then goes to the Union Tribal Affairs Ministry and subsequently to the **Office of the Registrar General of India (ORGI)**.
- If the ORGI approves the inclusion, the proposal is then sent to the [National Commission for Scheduled Tribes](#), and if they concur, the proposal is forwarded to the Cabinet for amendment to the [Constitution \(Scheduled Tribes\) Order, 1950](#).
- In September 2022, the government approved the [inclusion of certain communities in the lists of Scheduled Tribes](#). These include:

- **Binjhia** in Chhattisgarh
- **Narikoravan** and **Kurivikkaran** in Tamil Nadu
- **'Betta-Kuruba'** in Karnataka,
- **Hattis** from Himachal Pradesh
- **Gond** Community in Uttar Pradesh

Why are Other Tribal Groups in Manipur opposing the Demand of Meiteis?

- **Meitei's Already in Majority:** One reason for this is that the **Meitei community is already dominant in terms of population and political** representation, as most of the Assembly constituencies are in the **valley where the Meiteis live.**
 - The ST communities fear that granting ST status to the Meiteis **would result in them losing job opportunities** and other affirmative actions meant for STs.
- **Meitei Culture has Recognition:** Meitei language is already included in the **8th Schedule of the Constitution**, and some sections of the Meitei community are already classified under **Scheduled Castes (SC)** or **Other Backward Classes (OBC)**, which **gives them access to certain opportunities.**
- **More Political Influence:** They also think that the demand for ST status is a way for the dominant Meitei community from the valley area to **gain political influence and control over the hill areas of the state by** diverting attention from the political demands of **other tribal groups like the Kukis and Nagas.**
 - The Kukis are an ethnic group including multiple tribes originally inhabiting the NE states such as **Manipur, Mizoram and Assam; parts of Burma** (now Myanmar), and **Sylhet district and Chittagong hill tracts of Bangladesh.**
 - Wanting to dominate trade and cultural activities in these areas, **Kukis and Nagas often engaged in violent standoffs**, with villages being torched, civilians killed and so on.
- **Eviction of Tribal Groups:** One of the other reasons for the discontent has been the state government's notices since August 2022 claiming that 38 villages in the Churachandpur-Khoupum Protected Forest area are **"illegal settlements" and its residents are "encroachers".**
 - Following this, the government set out on an eviction drive which resulted in clashes.
 - Kuki groups have claimed that the **survey and eviction is a violation of Article 371C**, which confers some **administrative autonomy to the tribal-dominated hill areas of Manipur.**

What is the Ethnic Composition of Manipur?

- **About:**
 - Meiteis are the largest community in Manipur and there are **34 recognized tribes** broadly classified as **'Any Kuki Tribes' and 'Any Naga Tribes'.**
 - The Imphal valley in the state, at the centre of Manipur, accounts for **about 10% of its landmass and** is home primarily to the **Meitei and Meitei Pangals** who constitute roughly **64.6% of the state's population.**
 - The remaining 90% of the state's geographical area comprises **hills surrounding the valley**, which are home to the recognized tribes, making up about **35.4% of the state's population.**
 - While a **majority of the Meiteis are Hindus followed by Muslims (8%),** the 33 recognised tribes, broadly classified into **'Any Naga tribes' and 'Any Kuki tribes' are largely Christians.**
 - Manipur, along with Dimapur district of Nagaland, was brought under the purview of the **ILP System** in December 2019. **ILP is a special permit obligatorily required by "outsiders" from other regions** of the country to enter the notified states.
- **Key Points of Meitei Community:**
 - The Meitei people are also known as Manipuri people.
 - Their primary language is the **Meitei language, which is also called Manipuri** and is the **only official language** of Manipur.
 - They are predominantly settled in the Imphal Valley, although a significant number **reside**

in other Indian states, such as Assam, Tripura, Nagaland, Meghalaya, and Mizoram.

- There is also a notable presence of **Meitei in the neighboring countries of Myanmar and Bangladesh.**
- The Meitei people are divided into clans, and members of the **same clan do not intermarry.**



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What are the Special Provisions under Article 371?

- **Article 371** of the Constitution provides “special provisions” for 11 states, including six states of the Northeast (excluding Tripura and Meghalaya).
 - Articles 369-392 (including some that have been removed) appear in Part XXI of the Constitution, titled ‘**Temporary, Transitional and Special Provisions**’.
 - **Article 370** deals with ‘Temporary Provisions with respect to the State of Jammu and Kashmir’;
- Articles **371 and 371A-371J** define special provisions with regard to another state (or states).
 - **Article 371I deals with Goa**, but it does not include any provision that can be deemed ‘special’.

Article (Amendment)	For State	Provision
Article 371	Maharashtra and Gujarat	The Governor has “special responsibility” to establish “ separate development boards ” for “Vidarbha, Marathwada, and the rest of Maharashtra”, and Saurashtra and Kutch in Gujarat.
Article 371A (13 th Amendment Act, 1962)	Nagaland	Parliament cannot legislate in matters of Naga religion or social practices, Naga customary

		law and procedure, administration of civil and criminal justice involving decisions according to Naga customary law, and ownership and transfer of land without concurrence of the state Assembly.
Article 371B (22 nd amendment Act, 1969)	Assam	The President may provide for the constitution and functions of a committee of the Assembly consisting of members elected from the state's tribal areas.
Article 371C (27 th Amendment Act, 1971)	Manipur	The President may provide for the constitution of a committee of elected members from the Hill areas in the Assembly and entrust "special responsibility" to the Governor to ensure its proper functioning.
Article 371D (32 nd Amendment Act, 1973; Substituted by The Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2014)	Andhra Pradesh and Telangana	The President must ensure "equitable opportunities and facilities" in "public employment and education to people from different parts of the state". He may require the state government to organise "any class or classes of posts in a civil service of, or any class or classes of civil posts under, the State into different local cadres for different parts of the State". Article 371E is for Andhra Pradesh but not a special provision.
Article 371F (36 th Amendment Act, 1975)	Sikkim	The members of the Legislative Assembly of Sikkim shall elect the representative of Sikkim in the House of the People. To protect the rights and interests of various sections of the population of Sikkim, Parliament may provide for the number of seats in the Assembly, which may be filled only by candidates from those sections.
Article 371G (53 rd Amendment Act, 1986)	Mizoram	Parliament cannot make laws on "religious or social practices of the Mizos, Mizo customary law and procedure, administration of civil and criminal justice involving decisions according to Mizo customary law, ownership and transfer of land... unless the

Article 371H (55 th Amendment Act, 1986)	Arunachal Pradesh	Assembly... so decide The Governor has a special responsibility with regard to law and order , and “he shall, after consulting the Council of Ministers, exercise his individual judgment as to the action to be taken”.
Article 371J (98 th Amendment Act, 2012)	Karnataka	There is a provision for a separate development board for the Hyderabad-Karnataka region . There shall be “ equitable allocation of funds for developmental expenditure over the said region ”, and “equitable opportunities and facilities” for people of this region in government jobs and education.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ):

Prelims:

Q. The provisions in Fifth Schedule and Sixth Schedule in the Constitution of India are made in order to (2015)

- (a) protect the interests of Scheduled Tribes
- (b) determine the boundaries between States
- (c) determine the powers, authority and responsibilities of Panchayats
- (d) protect the interests of all the border States

Ans: (a)

Mains:

Q. What are the two major legal initiatives by the State since Independence addressing discrimination against Scheduled Tribes (STs)? (2017)

Q. Why are the tribals in India referred to as ‘the Scheduled Tribes’? Indicate the major provisions enshrined in the Constitution of India for their upliftment. (2016)

Source: TH