

## BODOLAND AREA IS SET TO BE REDRAWN

Relevant for: Indian Polity | Topic: Issues and Challenges Pertaining to the Federal Structure, Dispute Redressal Mechanisms, and the Centre-State Relations

Ranjan Daimary

The Bodoland Territorial Area District (BTAD) in Assam is set to be redrawn with the grant of special status.

According to a proposed memorandum accessed by *The Hindu*, the autonomous council will have special rights for the domiciles, and “outsiders” will have to obtain a “permit” to work in these areas. The draft says the persons “allowed to stay within the council for time being on work permit” will not have the right to vote.

The Union Home Ministry and the Assam government are expected to sign a memorandum of settlement with the banned insurgent group National Democratic Front of Bodoland-Progressive (NDFB-P), on January 27. The outfit had been demanding a separate land for the Bodos, an ethnic group in Assam. Its campaign was marred by violence that had claimed many lives.

Under the proposal, the “Government of India shall grant general amnesty to the convicts of the NDFB (if any) and withdraw all the cases and charges framed” against the members and sympathisers of the outfit. The proposal also includes withdrawal of all cases filed against NDFB workers by the NIA, the CBI and the police and release of all NDFB members from jails.

At least five new districts will be created and included in the revamped BTAD. Its jurisdiction will be extended to Sonitpur and Lakhimpur by creating Mainasiri and Holoongi districts.

Now the BTAD, or the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC), comprises four districts. The first Bodo accord, signed with the All Bodo Students Union in 1993, led to the creation of a Bodoland Autonomous Council with limited political powers. The BTC was created in 2003 with some more financial and other powers.

The draft says the electoral rolls for the council will be revised and prepared and consequently domicile certificates issued to the residents. “A person will be eligible to cast his/her vote in any election within the Council/Territory if only the names of his/her preceding generations were found in the voter list of 1971 or before, or the Legacy Data of 1971 or before, in compliance with the final National Register of Citizens, from any constituency within the Council/Territory,” it reads.

The BTAD and other areas mentioned under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution have been exempted from the Citizenship (Amendment) Act that enabled undocumented non-Muslims from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan, who entered India on or before December 31, 2014, to apply for citizenship.

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