

What is the Suspension of Operations (SoO) agreement?

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In news—In a surprise move, the Manipur government withdrew from the SoO agreement with two hill-based tribal insurgent groups, alleging that they were “influencing agitation among forest encroachers”.

About SoO agreement-

- **The SoO pact was signed on August 22, 2008, with the primary objective of initiating political dialogue.**
- Talks are ongoing under AB Mathur, former special secretary of the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), as the interlocutor.
- **The Kuki outfits who were initially demanding a separate Kuki state have come down to a ‘Kukiland territorial council’,** which would have financial and administrative powers independent of the Manipur Assembly and government.
- There are nearly 30 Kuki insurgent groups in Manipur, of which 25 are under tripartite Suspension of Operations (SoO) with the Government of India and the state.
- As many as 17 are under the umbrella group Kuki National Organisation (KNO), and eight are under the United People’s Front (UPF).

What are the terms of the SoO pact?

- While the **period of the SoO agreement is one year,** it is extendable according to the progress of its implementation.
- To oversee the effective implementation of the SoO pact, **a committee called the Joint Monitoring Group (JMG), with representatives from all the signatories, has been formed.**

- The important terms under the pact are that **security forces, including state and central forces, are not to launch any operations, nor can the underground groups.**
- The **signatories of UPF and KNO shall abide by the Constitution of India,** the laws of the land and the territorial integrity of Manipur.
- They are prohibited from committing all kinds of atrocities, extortion, among others.
- The **militant cadres are to be confined in designated camps identified by the Government.**
- Arms are deposited in a safe room under a double-locking system. The groups are given arms only to guard their camps and protect their leaders.
- As a rehabilitation package, the UG cadres living in the designated camps are given a **monthly stipend of Rs 5000.**
- Financial assistance is also being provided to maintain the designated camps.

The Kuki insurgency-

- While the Naga movement is the country's longest-running insurgency, underground Kuki groups, too, have fought the Indian government for an **'independent Kuki homeland', spread across Manipur.**
- The Kuki insurgency gained momentum after ethnic clashes with the Nagas of Manipur in the early 1990s, with the Kuki arming themselves against Naga aggression.
- While the two tribes have shared a hostile relationship since colonial times, things came to a head in the 1990s when the Naga-Kuki clashes took place.
- **Land that the Kukis claim to be their "homeland" in the Manipur hills overlaps with the imagined Naga homeland of Greater Nagaland or Nagalim.**
- As many as 115 Kuki men, women and children were believed to have been killed by the NSCN-IM in

Tengnoupal in 1993 – a day still marked by the Kuki as 'black day'.

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