
Prelims and Mains focus: about Article 371 and its various provisions related to northeast states; related issues

News: Union Home Minister assured the northeastern States that the Centre would never touch Article 371 of the Constitution that grants special provisions to the region.

About the event

Union Home Minister, also the chairman of the North Eastern Council (NEC), gave the assurance in his inaugural address at the 68th plenary session of the NEC in Guwahati.

The meeting was attended by the Governors, the Chief Ministers and officials of eight northeastern States.

Background

As the government abrogated Article 370 that gave special status to Jammu and Kashmir, Article 371, which has special provisions for other States, mostly from the Northeast, has invited some attention.

About Article 371 of the Indian Constitution

- Article 371 gives the power to the President of India to establish separate development boards for Vidarbha, Marathwada regions of Maharashtra and the rest of the State and Saurashtra, Kutch and rest of Gujarat.

- Special provisions with respect to Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Goa are dealt in Articles 371D and 371E, 371J, 371I respectively.
• Most of the States that have been accorded special provisions under Article 371 are in the northeast and the special status aims to preserve their tribal culture.

1. **Article 371(A)** states that no act of Parliament shall apply to the **State of Nagaland** in respect of the religious or social practices of the Nagas, its customary law and procedure, administration of civil and criminal justice involving decisions according to Naga customary law and ownership and transfer of land and its resources.

It shall apply to Nagaland only after the State Assembly passes a resolution to do so, it says.

In June 2019, the Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) of the **Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party (NDPP)** observed that Article 371(A) impedes the State’s development. **Article 371(A) states that land and its resources in the State belong to the people and not the government.**

The MLA said due to the provisions in Article 371(A), the landowners usually do not allow the government to carry out any development activities on their plot.

2. **Article 371-G** that deals with special provisions with respect to **Mizoram** has similar nature.

It states that an act of Parliament relating to religious and social practices of Mizo customary law and procedure, administration of civil or criminal justice involving decisions according to Mizo customary law, ownership and transfer of land and its resources will not apply to Mizoram unless State assembly decides to do so.

3. **Article 371B** deals with special provision with respect to the State of **Assam**.

The main objective of inserting Article 371B was to facilitate the creation of the sub-State ‘Meghalaya’.

4. **Article 371C** deals with special provisions with respect to **Manipur** which
became a State in 1972.

5. **Articles 371F, 371H** talk about special provisions with respect to States of Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh, respectively.