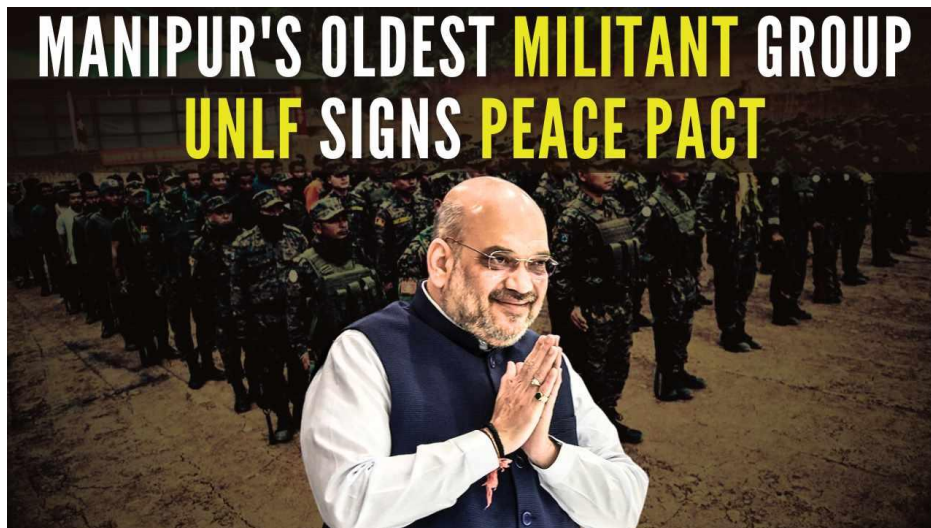


# UNLF Signs Peace Deal With Centre

## Why In News

- **Union Home Minister Amit Shah** announced the signing of a **peace agreement** with the Meitei separatist group **United National Liberation Front (UNLF)** in Manipur, terming it a “historic milestone.”
- The Home Minister also expressed the hope that this would encourage other valley-based insurgent groups (VBIGs) to participate in a peace process.



## What Is The UNLF

- The UNLF was formed on **November 24, 1964**, and is the **oldest valley-based** insurgent group — distinct from the insurgent groups active in the state’s Naga-dominated and Kuki-Zomi dominated hills.



- It was formed with the demand of secession from India under the leadership of **Arembam Samarendra Singh**, who was the general secretary of the group. Two of the top central committee leaders — Khalalung Kamei and Thangkhopao Singsit — were a Naga and a Kuki.



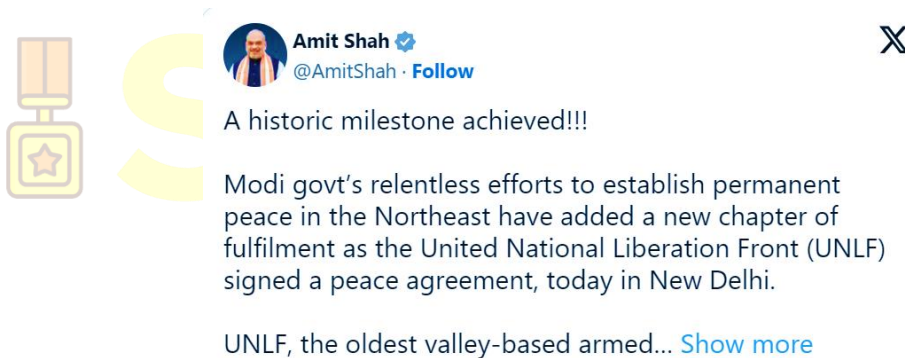
- The UNLF is believed to have received **its initial training from the NSCN (IM)**, the largest Naga insurgent group. Its armed wing, the Manipur People's Army, was formed in 1990 and over the years, it has carried out multiple attacks targeting Indian security personnel.
- A proscribed group, **banned under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act**, it has largely been functioning from camps and training bases in Myanmar's Sagaing Region, Chin state, and Rakhine state with the patronage of the Myanmar military.



- While the **UNLF has weakened over the years**, pushed across the border to Myanmar, there have been **concerns about its increased activity**, along with other VBIGs, during the course of the ongoing ethnic conflict in Manipur.
- The two UNLF factions are believed to have trained around **500 new recruits** in the past months.

## Peace Agreement

- Manipur's oldest valley-based armed group **UNLF has signed a tripartite peace agreement** with the centre and the state government.
- The peace agreement signed today with the UNLF by the government of India and the government of Manipur marks the **end of a six-decade-long armed movement**," Mr Shah said in the post.
- "It is a landmark achievement in realising Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji's vision of **all-inclusive development and providing a better future to the youth in northeast India**," the Home Minister said.



## What Is The Precedent For The Peace Agreement

- The VBIGs have **never entered into an agreement** with the Centre or participated in any peace talks.
- Author and former fellow at Indian Institute of Advanced Study, Malem Ningthouja, however, said it was not possible to definitively state that this was the first group to come to an understanding.

- “In the past, there have been **some groups like the UPPK, KCP and Maoist Communist Group** — though their strength may have been insignificant — which have been either **disbanded or rendered into insignificance** And we don’t know under what terms they did so.



- Even in this case, **we don’t know the terms of the agreement** but this has a spectacular impact since it’s considered to be a major group.
- The UNLF underwent a **formal split in the mid-1990s**, when **N Oken** broke away, and his faction became the **Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup (KYKL)**, another proscribed group).



- After Samarendra was assassinated in 2000, the UNLF leadership was taken up by **R K Meghen**, who was arrested in 2010. While Meghen was imprisoned, **Khundongbam Pambei** became chairman.
- There was **another split in 2021**, when Pambei broke away from the rest of the central committee. So now, there are two factions, one under the **chairmanship of Pambei** and the other under the **chairmanship of NC Koireng**. Pambei has

been open to talks, and the process to begin ceasefire negotiations goes back to 2020.



## What About The Other Groups

- While the UNLF is the **oldest of such groups**, several other Meitei insurgent groups have come into being in subsequent years.
- The UNLF is **one of the seven “Meitei Extremist Organisations”** banned by the Union government.
- The UNLF faction under Koireng continues to be opposed to talks.
- On the other hand, a **tripartite Suspension of Operations** agreement between the Centre, Manipur state and the **Kuki-Zomi insurgent groups** had been reached in 2008.
- In March this year, the Manipur government pulled out of the agreement with the Zomi Revolutionary Army and the Kuki National Army, saying they were **“influencing agitation among forest encroachers”**.

