



Assam-Meghalaya Border Dispute

For Prelims: Assam-Meghalaya Border Dispute, Article 263 of the Constitution

For Mains: Interstate-border Disputes and Related Issues

Why in News?

Recently, six people were **killed and several others injured during an alleged clash** between the **Assam Police** and a mob in an area bordering the **West Karbi Anglong district of Assam** and **Mukroh village in Meghalaya's** West Jaintia Hills.

- The killings come ahead of the **second phase of talks between the two states** to resolve their **boundary dispute**.

What is Assam-Meghalaya Border Dispute?

- **About:**
 - **Assam and Meghalaya** have a longstanding dispute in **12 stretches of their 884-km shared border**.
 - **The Assam-Meghalaya border dispute are the areas of** Upper Tarabari, Gazang reserve forest, Hahim, Langpih, Borduar, Boklapara, Nongwah, Matamur, Khanapara-Pilangkata, Deshdemoreah Block I and Block II, Khanduli and Retacherra.
- **History:**
 - During British rule, undivided Assam included present-day **Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya and Mizoram**.
 - Meghalaya was **carved out in 1972**, its boundaries demarcated as per the **Assam Reorganisation (Meghalaya) Act of 1969**, but has held a **different interpretation of the border since**.
 - In 2011, the Meghalaya government had identified **12 areas of difference with Assam**, spread over approximately 2,700 sq km.
- **Major Point of Concern:**
 - A major point of contention between Assam and Meghalaya is the **district of Langpih in West Garo Hills** bordering the **Kamrup district of Assam**.
 - Langpih was part of the **Kamrup district during the British colonial period** but post-Independence, it became **part of the Garo Hills and Meghalaya**.
 - Assam considers it to be **part of the Mikir Hills in Assam**.
 - Meghalaya has questioned **Blocks I and II of the Mikir Hills** -now **Karbi Anglong region** - being part of Assam.
 - Meghalaya says **these were parts of erstwhile United Khasi and Jaintia Hills** districts.
- **Attempts to Resolve Dispute:**
 - In 1985, under the Assam chief minister and Meghalaya chief minister, an **official committee was constituted** under the former [Chief Justice of India](#) Y V Chandrachud.
 - However, **a solution was not found**.
 - Both state governments identified **six out of 12 disputed areas for resolution** in the first phase:
 - Three areas contested between **West Khasi Hills district** in Meghalaya and **Kamrup in Assam**, two between **RiBhoi in Meghalaya** and **Kamrup-Metro**, and one between **East Jaintia Hills** in Meghalaya and **Cachar in Assam**.
 - After a series of meetings and visits by teams to the disputed areas, **both sides submitted reports** based on five mutually agreed principles:
 - Historical perspective, ethnicity of local population, contiguity with boundary, peoples' will and administrative convenience.
 - **A final set of recommendations were made jointly:**
 - Out of 36.79 sq km of disputed area taken up for settlement in the first phase, **Assam would get full control of 18.46 sq km** and **Meghalaya of 18.33 sq km**.
 - In March 2022, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed based on these recommendations.
 - The second round of discussions for the remaining six phases is to **commence by the end November 2022**.

What Additional Can be done to Resolve the Dispute?

- Boundary disputes between the states can be settled by using [satellite mapping of the actual border locations](#).
- Reviving the [inter-state council](#) can be an option for resolution of an Inter-state dispute.
 - Under **Article 263 of the Constitution**, the Inter-state council is **expected to inquire and advise** on disputes, discuss subjects common to all states and make recommendations for better policy coordination.
- Similarly, [Zonal councils](#) need to be revived to discuss the matters of common concern to states in each zone—matters relating to social and economic planning, border disputes, inter-state transport, etc.
- India is the epitome of unity in diversity. However, in order to strengthen this unity furthermore, both the centre and state governments, need to imbibe the ethos of [cooperative federalism](#).

Which Other States of India are Involved in Border Disputes?

▪ Belagavi Border Dispute:

- The [Belagavi Border Dispute](#) is between the states of **Maharashtra and Karnataka**.
 - Belgaum or Belagavi is **currently part of Karnataka** but is claimed by Maharashtra.
- In 1957, slighted by the implementation of the **States Reorganisation Act, 1956**, Maharashtra **demanded readjustment of its border with Karnataka**.

▪ Odisha's Border Dispute:

- [The Odisha Border Dispute](#) is between the states of **Odisha and Andhra Pradesh**.
- Odisha and Andhra Pradesh have been locked in a territorial dispute over **Kotia gram panchayat since 1960**. Disputes pertain over 21 villages in Kotia gram panchayat.
- In 2006, Odisha sent a complaint to the Central Government under Section 3 of the [Inter-State River Water Disputes \(ISRWD\) Act, 1956](#) regarding its water disputes with Andhra Pradesh pertaining to [Inter-State River Vamsadhara](#).

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

Q. Constitutional mechanisms to resolve the inter-state water disputes have failed to address and solve the problems. Is the failure due to structural or process inadequacy or both? Discuss. **(2013)**

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