

## Disquiet in the Northeast: On Assam–Meghalaya Boundary Dispute

The Hindu

Paper - II  
 (Indian Polity)

❖ **Boundary disputes between States should be resolved quickly.**

On November 22, five villagers from Meghalaya and an Assam forest guard were killed and two others were seriously injured in a firing incident along the boundary between the two States. The Assam government said the incident happened after its forest guards tried to intercept a truck smuggling illegal timber. When the truck was stopped, the forest personnel were gheraoed by unknown miscreants who resorted to violence, according to Assam, which maintains that the staff resorted to firing to save their lives. Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad Sangma said on Twitter that the Assam police and Assam forest guards entered Meghalaya and “resorted to unprovoked firing”. Versions differ and both States have instituted separate inquiries, but the mistrust and underlying conflicts in the northeast that lead to such incidents are deeper.



### Dispute between Assam and Meghalaya

Assam and Meghalaya have a five-decade old boundary dispute. Meghalaya, carved out of Assam as an autonomous region in 1970, became a full-fledged State in 1972. In March, Assam and Meghalaya resolved the boundary dispute at six out of total 12 such locations along their 884.9 km boundary, and the next round of talks was to take place soon. Though the latest flare-up did not arise out of this dispute, it happened along a disputed border stretch.

## Why the dispute between the states that were separated from Assam?

Assam has boundary disputes at various points in time with the States carved out of it — Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Meghalaya and Mizoram. Last year, the police forces of Assam and Mizoram clashed, killing five on the Assam side. Dozens of people have died in conflicts along State borders in the northeast over the years. Union Home Minister Amit Shah had asked Assam to take the lead in resolving the lingering disputes, which have their origins in the colonial cartography that overlooked the life patterns of local communities. Traditional hunting, grazing and farming grounds of communities got divided by modern administrative boundaries at many places.

## How to try to solve

When new States were formed, such concerns acquired a more serious nature, and the Naga demand for a unified homeland that is now spread beyond the State of Nagaland is instructive. It is unfortunate and tragic that States that are part of the Indian Union are involved in violent clashes with one another. The BJP is in government in much of the northeast and has the leverage to aim for a comprehensive resolution of all outstanding disputes in the region. Communities will have to be taken into confidence, and boundaries adjusted. In any case, these man-made lines should not be allowed to restrict the movement of people in pursuit of a livelihood.

## Assam-Meghalaya border dispute and reasons:

↳ Both the states of Assam and Meghalaya share an 885-kilometer-long border. At present, there were disputes on 12 points on their borders. The disputes were over the areas of Upper Tarabari, Gajang Reserved Forest, Hahim, Langpeh, Borduar, Bokalapara, Nongwah, Matmur, Khanapara-Pilangkata, Deshdemorah Block I and Block II, Khanduli and Retchera. Out of which the solution on 6 points was done in March 2022 and talks are going on for the remaining 6. In fact, Meghalaya was carved out of Assam under the Assam Reorganization Act, of 1971, a law that became the subject of controversy, and challenged by Meghalaya.

## The main point of contention:

↳ A major point of contention between Assam and Meghalaya is the Langpeh district in the West Garo Hills bordering the Kamrup district of Assam. Langpeh was a part of the Kamrup district during the British colonial period, but after independence, it became a part of Garo Hills Meghalaya. Assam considers it a part of the Mikir Hills (located in Assam). While Meghalaya has questioned Blocks I and II of Mikir Hills, which is now part of the Karbi Anglong region of Assam. Meghalaya maintains that these were part of the erstwhile United Khasi and Jaintia Hills districts.

## Attempt to resolve disputes:

↳ Both the states of Assam and Meghalaya have constituted Boundary Dispute Settlement Committees. Two regional committees were also constituted to resolve the border disputes in a phased manner and five aspects would be considered while resolving these border disputes. Such as historical facts, ethnicity, administrative convenience, the mood of the people concerned, and proximity to the land.

## Brief Description of Disputes Between States in India

- ↳ It is not that the border disputes between the states are only in the Northeast. States like Maharashtra, Karnataka, Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, and Odisha are also having border conflicts with their neighbors. In this, the dispute between Maharashtra and Karnataka regarding Belgaum comes into the headlines almost every year. Similarly, land disputes in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar often turn into violent conflicts. 17 states of India have border disputes with their neighbors.
- ↳ If seen, the border disputes in the North-Eastern states date back to the British era. Which princely state owned the land has been defined more than once. Because of this, the states are following the rules according to their convenience, but the disputes between Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala, Odisha, and Andhra Pradesh are linguistic, while the dispute between Uttar Pradesh and Bihar is natural. Every year in the rains, the Ganges changes its course, and the dispute shifts to a new place.

### Expected Question

**Que. Which of the following states share border with Assam?**

1. Arunachal Pradesh
2. Nagaland
3. Manipur
4. Tripura
5. Sikkim

Select the correct answer using the codes given below :

- (a) Only 1 and 2                      (b) Only 1, 2, 3 and 4  
(c) Only 3 and 4                      (d) 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

**Answer : B**

### Mains Expected Question & Format

**Que.: Border disputes are frequent in the north-eastern states. Give the reasons for these border disputes. Discuss the efforts being made by the government for their diagnosis.**

**Answer Format :**

❖ **Introduction (30-40 words)**

Describe the recent controversy of North Eastern states.

❖ **Main Body (150-160 words)**

Explain the reasons for the boundary dispute of the North Eastern states.

❖ **Conclusion (40-50 words)**

Explain the efforts being made by the government to solve these disputes of the North-Eastern states.

**Note:** - The question of the main examination given for practice is designed keeping in mind the upcoming UPSC mains examination. Therefore, to get an answer to this question, you can take the help of this source as well as other sources related to this topic.