Assam - Eviction of Illegal Migrants

Mains: *GS I - Population and associated issues*

GS III- Security challenges and their management in border areas

Why in News?

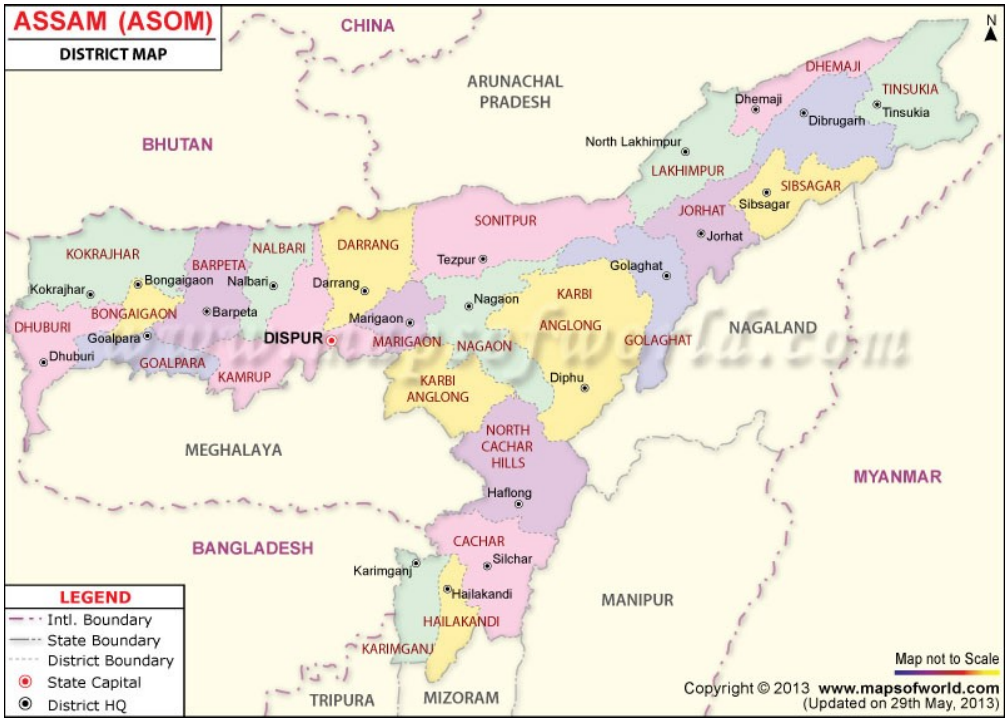
Recently, Assam government's move to evict encroachers from its forestlands has made other States bordering Assam to take measures to ensure that those evicted from Assam do not cross over.

What is the Physio-geography of Assam?

- It is situated in the northeast of India and largest northeastern states in terms population.

National Borders	International Borders
• **North** - Arunachal Pradesh • **East** - Nagaland and Manipur • **West** - West Bengal • **South** - Tripura, Meghalaya & Mizoram	• **North** – Bhutan • **South** - Bangladesh

- **Physiographic division –** Northern Himalayas (Eastern hills), Brahmaputra plains, Deccan plateau (Karbi anglong).
- **Climate –** Tropical monsoon Rainforest climate with high levels of humidity and high rainfall.
- **Major rivers –** Brahmaputra and its tributaries
- **National parks –** Kaziranga, Manas, Dibru - Saikhowa, Nameri, Dehing, Raimona Orang National Park and Tiger Reserve
- **Indigenous tribe –** Bodos, Mishing, Karbhis, Rabhas



What are the reasons for evictions?

- **Background** – It stems from the *encroachment by the 'Bangladeshi', 'Miya', or 'illegal infiltrators'* who are Muslims with roots in present-day Bangladesh.
- They were alleged to have polarized electoral politics in Assam during and after the anti-foreigners Assam Agitation (1979-'85).

> *The Assam Accord, signed on 15 August 1985 in New Delhi, was a Memorandum of Settlement between the Government of India and leaders of the Assam Movement. A key provision was that foreigners who entered Assam between 1951 and 1961 would be granted full citizenship, including voting rights.*

- It led to the signing of an accord prescribing a cut-off date with midnight of March 24, 1971 for the detection, deletion (from electoral rolls), and deportation of "illegal immigrants".
- **Encroachment of religious places** – It is said that 15,288.52 *bighas of satra (Vaishnav monastery)* lands remain illegally occupied by people of doubtful citizenship across 29 districts.
- **Encroachments of forestlands** – Union Environment Ministry's report to the National Green Tribunal stated that 3*,620.9 square kilometers of forest area* in Assam were under encroachment as of March 2024.
- **Encroachment of wetlands** – Houses of 130 families were bulldozed to clear the ***Silsako Beel,*** *a major wetland in Guwahati* which was alleged to be encroached in 2022.

How the eviction process is followed?

- Evicting encroachers from forestlands, wetlands, and government revenue lands is not

a new phenomenon in Assam.

- **Eviction basis** - The Assam government which came to power in 2016 promised to *secure jaati (race), maati (land), and bheti (home)*.
- Gauhati high Court ordered to reclaim encroached forestlands.
- **Eviction** – The 1st eviction drive was carried out in 3 fringe villages of eastern Assam's *Kaziranga National Park in 2016*.
- Between 2016 and July 2025, 1,080 families were evicted from 135 hectares of the *Paikan Reserve Forest* in Assam's Goalpara district.
- The Assam government has vowed to continue the eviction drive until Assam is encroachment-free in "at least 10 years" from 2025.
- **Target sections** – The eviction drives, allegedly *targeted at Bengali Muslims,* resumed again recently in June 2025.
- The eviction drives have *impacted non-Muslims as well*.
- **Exception –** Tribal people living in forest areas from before 2005 and covered by the Forest Rights Act would not be touched.
- They also made fast-track resettlement of at least 12 Ahom families who were evicted along with migrant Muslims from village grazing reserves across 4 locations in northeastern Assam's Lakhimpur district.

What are the challenges for neighboring states?

- **Entry of Illegal migrants –** The Assam government eviction drive in Golaghat district's Uriamghat, which borders Nagaland, was seen as an attempt to push illegal Bangladeshi immigrants into ancestral Naga land.
- Before the drive commenced, the police in Nagaland's Niuland district intercepted and turned 200 vehicles carrying illegal migrants
- A coalition of extremist groups announced a task force to guard the Assam-Nagaland border against infiltrators.
- Increase vigilance in bordering Assam to prevent the evicted people from coming in and make the issuance of the inner-line permit.

Inner line permit(ILP) *is a concept drawn by colonial rulers it separated the tribal-populated hill areas in the Northeast from the plains. ILP is required for Indian citizens from outside these regions to enter and reside there, regardless of the duration.*

- **Cultural clash –** Nagaland, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh, and Meghalaya have mostly tribal populations, and the arrival of migrants like Bengali-speaking Muslims or Hindus from Bangladesh is seen as a threat to their identity and population balance.
- **Interstate disputes –** Encroachment is the core of the State's boundary disputes with Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Nagaland.
- Four States have been occupying 83,000 hectares of land belonging to the State.
- These States were carved out of Assam between 1963 and 1972.
- **Legal interventions** – Gauhati High Court directed Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland states to constitute a high-level committee to facilitate a coordinated action to clear illegal settlements from forestlands.

What lies ahead?

- Coordinated action among northeastern states can facilitate peaceful resolution of boundary disputes.
- Compliance with environmental and legal norms in eviction drives may reduce judicial intervention and help conserve sensitive ecosystems.
- Transparent and inclusive process can promote social harmony and protect the rights of all affected communities.

Reference

[The Hindu| Eviction of Illegal Migrants]

