Assam-Meghalaya Border Dispute

Why in news?

Tension gripped the Assam-Meghalaya border areas after six people were killed when police intercepted a truck that was allegedly smuggling timber.

What is the incident about?

- **The Firing** - There was 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.
- Six people were killed out of which five are from Meghalaya.
- **Assam's point** - The Assam Police has claimed that they opened fire in self defence after a mob surrounded them when they were trying to intercept a truck allegedly smuggling timber.
- Assam has announced a one-man inquiry commission under a retired High Court judge to probe the issue.
- **Meghalaya's stand** - Meghalaya Chief Minister termed the Assam Police's actions "inhuman" and said the state will set up a judicial commission and a Special Investigation Team until a central agency takes over.

What is the border dispute between the two states?

> *During the British rule, undivided Assam included present-day Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya and Mizoram.*

- Assam and Meghalaya share an 885-km border.
- In 1970, Meghalaya was carved out of Assam as an autonomous state.
- In 1972, Meghalaya became a full-fledged state following the **Assam Reorganisation (Meghalaya) Act of 1969**.
- The Meghalaya government found the Act unacceptable.
- As many as 12 land dispute points have been a bone of contention, out of which 6 areas have found some type of resolution after signing a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the two states.
- **Langpih** in the West Garo Hills bordering the Kamrup district of Assam is a major flashpoint.
- Langpih was part of the Kamrup district during the British colonial period, but post-Independence, it became part of the Garo Hills and Meghalaya.
- Meghalaya claims that the border problem in Langpih has been created by Assam, which has often set up police posts there.

What efforts have been taken to resolve the issue?

- 1983 - A joint official committee recommended that the Survey of India should re-delineate the border, teaming up with both the states.
- 1985 - An independent panel, spearheaded by Justice YV Chandrachud, was set up but Meghalaya denounced the report.
- 1991 - About 100 km of the border was demarcated with the help of the Survey of India, but Meghalaya protested strongly.
- 2011 - The Meghalaya Assembly passed a resolution for intervention of the Centre and the establishment of a boundary commission.
- The Centre asked the two governments to appoint nodal officers to discuss the dispute.
- 2019 - Meghalaya urged the Supreme Court to direct the Centre to resolve the dispute but the petition was turned down.
- 2022 - Assam and Meghalaya signed a draft resolution as a first step towards resolving a 50-year-old dispute.
- A MoU was signed between Assam Chief Minister and his Meghalaya counterpart in the presence of Home Minister Amit Shah in New Delhi which sought closure in 6 disputed sectors.
- The second phase of border talks decided to form three regional committees to resolve issues in the remaining disputed areas.

Related links - Assam-Mizoram Border Dispute

References

1. The Indian Express | What is the Assam-Meghalaya border dispute?
2. India Today | What's behind the Assam-Meghalaya border dispute?

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