Karnataka-Maharashtra Tussle

Why in news?

Karnataka CM condemned Maharashtra Deputy CM's comments over the border dispute between the two states.

What is the genesis of the dispute?

- The erstwhile Bombay Presidency included the present-day Karnataka districts of Vijayapura, Belagavi, Dharwad and Uttara-Kannada.
- In 1948, the Belgaum municipality requested that the district, having a predominantly Marathi-speaking population, be incorporated into the proposed Maharashtra state.
- However, the States Reorganisation Act of 1956 made Belgaum and 10 talukas of Bombay State a part of the then Mysore State (renamed as Karnataka in 1973).
- [The States Reorganisation Act divided states on linguistic and administrative lines]

What is the Mahajan Commission report?

- The States Reorganisation Commission sought to include talukas with a Kannada-speaking population of more than 50% in Mysore.
- Opponents of the region's inclusion in Mysore argued that Marathi-speakers outnumbered Kannadigas who lived there in 1956.
- In September 1957, the Bombay government echoed their demand and lodged a protest with the Centre.
- This led to the formation of the Mahajan Commission under former Chief Justice Mehr Chand Mahajan in October 1966.
- In 1967, the Commission recommended that 264 villages be transferred to Maharashtra (which formed in 1960).
- It also said that Belgaum and 247 villages remain with Karnataka.

What was the response?

- Maharashtra rejected the report, calling it biased and illogical, and demanded another review.
- Karnataka welcomed the report, and has ever since continued to press for implementation.

- But, this has not been formally done by the Centre.

What was the basis of Maharashtra's claim?

- In 2004, the Maharashtra government moved the Supreme Court for a settlement of the border dispute under Article 131(b) of the Constitution.
- [**Article 131(b)** - Original jurisdiction of the Supreme Court in any dispute between the Government of India and any State or States on one side and one or more other States on the other.]
- It demanded 814 villages from Karnataka on the basis of contiguity, relative linguistic majority and wishes of the people.
- The claim over Belagavi and surrounding areas was based on Marathi-speaking people and linguistic homogeneity.
- The claim over Konkani-speaking Karwar and Supa is based on its claim that Konkani as a dialect of Marathi.
- Its argument was based on the theory of village being the unit for calculation and enumerated linguistic population in each village.

What is Karnataka's position?

- Karnataka has argued that the settlement of boundaries as per the States Reorganisation Act is final.
- The State argues that the issue would reopen border issues that have not been contemplated under the Act.
- It also says that such a demand should not be permitted.
- Besides, the States Reorganisation Commission vested Belagavi with Karnataka.

What are the later developments?

- Maharashtra continues to claim over 814 villages along the border, as well as Belgaum city, which are currently part of Karnataka.
- Successive governments in Maharashtra have demanded their inclusion within the state – a claim that Karnataka contests.
- In 2019, Maharashtra's CM appointed two ministers as coordinators to oversee the state's efforts to expedite the case related to the dispute.
- Tensions escalated in the border region later that month.

Source: The Hindu, Indian Express



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