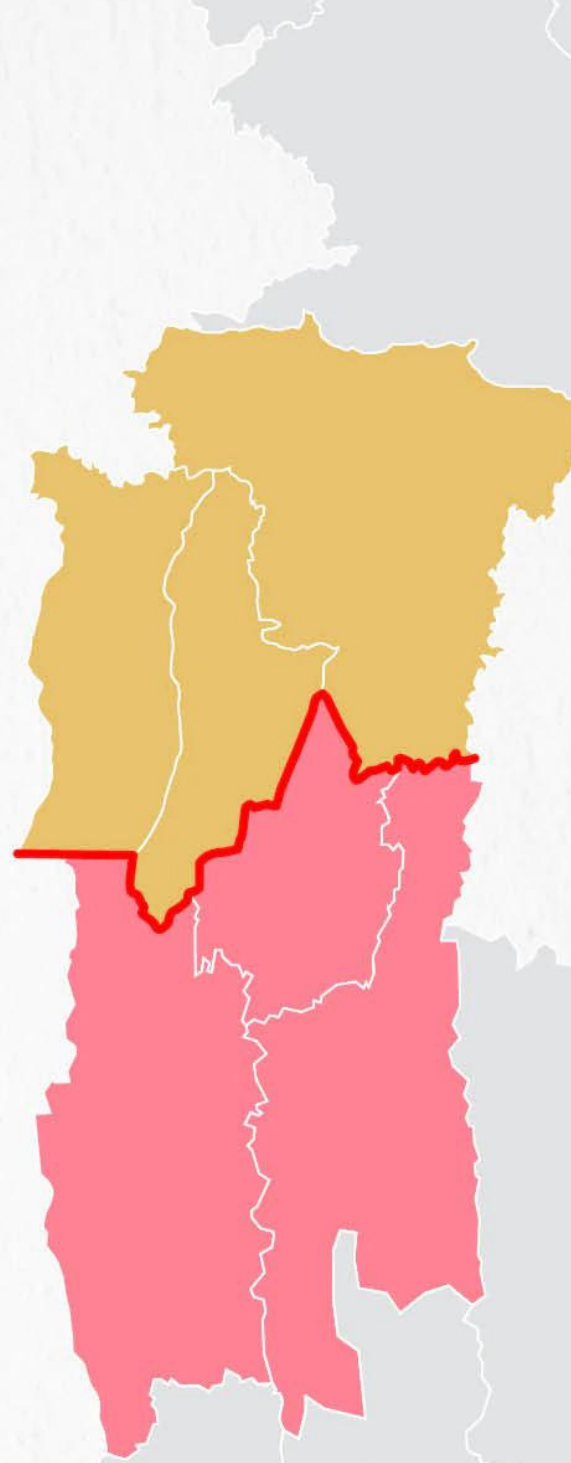


SPECIAL ISSUE JULY WEEK 5

## ASSAM-MIZORAM BORDER DISPUTE



## Special Issue

July (Week 5)

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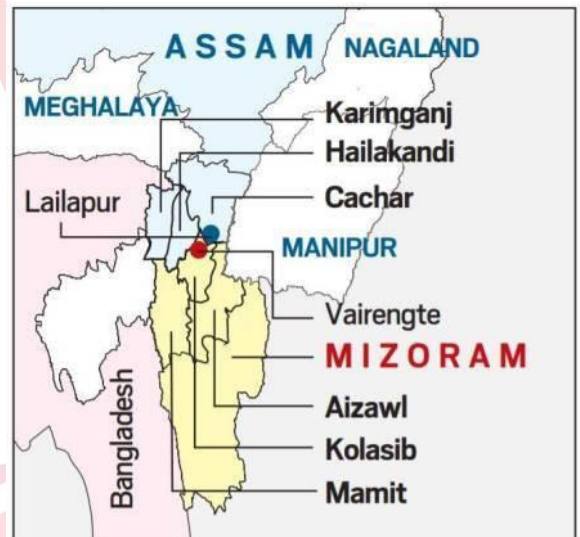
## **All about the Assam-Mizoram border dispute**

(Source: [Indian Express](#) )

**Context:** At least six Assam Police personnel were killed after the old boundary dispute between Assam and Mizoram exploded in violent clashes at a contested border point recently. In October last year, residents of Assam and Mizoram had clashed twice in the space of a week over territory, in which at least eight people were injured and a few huts and small shops were torched. The violence spotlights the long-standing inter-state boundary issues in the Northeast, particularly between Assam and the states that were carved out of it.

### **What happened in October 2020?**

- Residents of Lailapur village in Assam's Cachar district **clashed with residents of localities near Vairengte in Mizoram's Kolasib district.**
- Days before this clash, on October 9, similar violence had taken place on the border of Karimganj (Assam) and Mamit (Mizoram) districts.
- On October 9, a farm hut and a betel nut plantation belonging to two Mizoram residents were set on fire.
- In the second incident in Cachar, some people from Lailapur had pelted Mizoram police personnel and Mizoram residents with stones.
- In turn, Mizoram residents mobilised and went after them.



### **What led to the violence and clashes?**

- According to an agreement between governments of Assam and Mizoram some years ago, status quo should be maintained in no man's land in the border area.
- However, people from Lailapur broke the status quo and allegedly constructed some temporary huts. People from Mizoram side went and set fire on them.
- On the other hand, Keerthi Jalli that the contested land belongs to Assam as per the state's records.
- In the October 9 incident, according to Mizoram officials, the land claimed by Assam has been cultivated for a long time by residents of Mizoram.
- The Karimganj DC, Anbamuthan MP, however, said that although the contested land was historically cultivated by Mizoram residents, on paper it fell within the Singla Forest Reserve that is under Karimganj's jurisdiction. Anbamuthan had told The Indian Express that the issue was being resolved. Mizoram borders Assam's Barak Valley; both border Bangladesh.
- Mizoram's civil society groups blame "illegal Bangladeshis" (alleged migrants from Bangladesh) on the Assam side. "Illegal Bangladeshis are creating all this trouble. They come and destroy our huts, cut our plants and this time pelted stones on our policemen.

### **What is the genesis of the boundary dispute?**

- In the Northeast's complex boundary equations, showdowns between Assam and Mizoram residents are less frequent than they are between, say, Assam and Nagaland residents.
- Nevertheless, the boundary between present-day Assam and Mizoram, 165 km long today, dates back to the colonial era, when Mizoram was known as Lushai Hills, a district of Assam.
- The dispute stems from a notification of 1875 that differentiated the Lushai Hills from the plains of Cachar, and another of 1933, that demarcates a boundary between the Lushai Hills and Manipur.



- A Mizoram Minister had told The Indian Express last year that Mizoram believes the boundary should be demarcated on the basis of the 1875 notification, which is derived from the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation (BEFR) Act, 1873.
- Mizo leaders have argued in the past against the demarcation notified in 1933 because Mizo society was not consulted. MZP's Vanlaltana said the Assam government follows the 1933 demarcation, and that was the point of conflict.
- Before the recent incidents the last time the boundary saw violence was in February 2018.
- On that occasion, the MZP had built a wooden rest house in a forest, ostensibly for use by farmers. The Assam Police and forest department officials had demolished it, saying this was in Assam territory.
- MZP members had then clashed with Assam personnel, who also thrashed a group of Mizoram journalists who had gone to cover the incident.

#### **Assam-Mizoram: What is the demarcated boundary?**

- Mizoram borders Assam's Barak Valley, and both border Bangladesh. The boundary between the two states, which runs 165 km today, has a history dating back to the time when Mizoram was a district of Assam and known as Lushai Hills. Boundary demarcations in 1875 and 1933, particularly the second one, are at the heart of the dispute.
- The 1875 demarcation, notified on August 20 that year, derived from the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation (BEFR) Act, 1873. It differentiated Lushai Hills from the plains of Cachar in Assam's Barak Valley. This was done in consultation with Mizo chiefs, and it became the basis for the Inner Line Reserve Forest demarcation in the Gazette two years later.
- The 1933 demarcation marks a boundary between Lushai Hills and Manipur, beginning at the tri-junction of Lushai Hills, Cachar district and Manipur. The Mizos do not accept this demarcation on the ground that their chiefs were not consulted this time.



- Vairengte in Mizoram and Lailapur in Assam have seen violence in recent months. Mamit and Mizoram capital Aizawl lie south of Kolasib.

#### **What are the other border disputes in the region?**

- Assam, which shares its boundary with all other Northeast states — and from which states such as Nagaland, Meghalaya and Mizoram were carved out — has been involved in disputes with several of its neighbours.



- Assam and Nagaland share has a 500-km boundary. Violent conflicts, some leading to deaths, have taken place in several phases since 1965. The Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses published a paper on these clashes in 2008.
- With Arunachal Pradesh, Assam shares an around 800-km boundary. Here, the first clashes were reported in 1992. Each state has accused the other of boundary transgressions and illegal encroachment. These issues are now being heard in the Supreme Court.
- With Meghalaya, Assam shares a boundary of 884 km. There has been a series of recent flare-ups here, too. The Meghalaya government claims it has 12 areas of disputes with Assam. The Chief Ministers of these states held talks in February this year and agreed on the need to maintain status quo and peace.

### **All about Jaipur's Amargarh Fort**

(Source: [Indian Express](#) )

**Context:** *A fort in Jaipur is at the centre of a conflict between the tribal Meena community and local Hindu groups. Both sides have filed police cases and are running social media campaigns to assemble at the fort and show their strength.*

#### **What is the dispute?**

- Members of the Meena community say the Amargarh Fort was built by a Meena ruler predating Rajput rule in Jaipur, and has been their holy site for centuries.
- Independent MLA Ramkesh Meena said people from the community used to worship Amba Mata and other deities in the fort.
- In June, following reports of idols being vandalised and hoisting of a saffron flag at the fort, Meena community members accused Hindu groups of trying to appropriate tribal symbols into the Hindutva fold, and of changing the name of Amba Mata to Ambika Bhawani.
- On July 21, the saffron flag was brought down, and a video of it getting torn in the process went viral on social media.
- Hindu groups have accused Meena community members of tearing the flag in presence of Ramkesh Meena, while the MLA and other Meena leaders have said that the Hindu groups had agreed to take down the flag after discussions, and that it got accidentally torn while members of Hindu groups were bringing it down.
- A Brahmin group too has joined the debate. At a press conference on Thursday, Brahmin Mahasabha president Suresh Mishra, who once contested an election on a Congress ticket, said Ambika Bhawani near the fort belongs to a family of priests conducting rituals here for generations.

#### **What is the history of the fort?**

- According to historian Rima Hooja, the present form of the Amargarh Fort was given in the 18th century by Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II, founder of Jaipur. "It has always been believed that there was some construction at the place before Jai Singh II built the fort," she said.
- Prior to Rajput rule by the Kachhwaha dynasty, Jaipur and its nearby regions were ruled by Meenas, who had political control, she said. She stressed the need for a detailed documentation of the history of the Meena community, now largely oral.
- Dr Heera Meena, former assistant professor in Delhi University and a scholar in tribal culture, said the fort was built by a Meena Sardar from the Nadla gotra, now known as Badgoti Meenas. "Sardars from the Meena community ruled large parts of Rajasthan till around 1100 AD," she said.
- She added that Amba Mata is different from Ambika Bhawani. "Like other tribal groups, Meenas too worship ancestors. Amba Mata was such an ancestor, a living person and not a god. Amba Mata is not



related to Ambika Bhawani or Durga. An effort is being made by Hindu organisations to appropriate Amba Mata as Ambika Bhawani,” she said.

**Why does the Meena community matter in Rajasthan?**

- The community has substantial clout. Of the 25 Assembly seats (out of 200) reserved for Scheduled Tribes, most are represented by Meena MLAs from both the Congress and BJP.
- The community is also well represented in the bureaucracy. According to Census 2011, STs constitute 13.48% of the state’s population.
- Due to a scattered population across the state, the community can influence election outcomes in unreserved seats, too.

