



Belagavi Border Dispute

For Prelims: SK Dhar committee, JVP Committee, Mahajan Committee, State Reorganization Act.

For Mains: Reorganization of States in India and related disputes.

Why in News

The **decades-old dispute between Karnataka and Maharashtra over the Belagavi** or as Maharashtra likes to call it the Belgaum district, is back in the headlines.

- **Belgaum or Belagavi** is currently part of Karnataka but is claimed by Maharashtra.



Key Points

- **About:**
 - In 1957, slighted by the implementation of the **States Reorganisation Act, 1956**, Maharashtra demanded readjustment of its border with Karnataka.
 - Maharashtra invoked **Section 21 (2) (b) of the Act** and submitted a memorandum to the Ministry of Home Affairs stating its objection to Marathi-speaking areas being added to Karnataka.
 - It claimed an **area of 2,806 square miles** that involved 814 villages, and three urban settlements of Belagavi, Karwar and Nippani with a total population of about 6.7 lakh, all part of the Mumbai Presidency before independence.

- The villages are spread across Belagavi and Uttar Kannada in north-western Karnataka, and Bidar and Gulbarga districts in north-eastern Karnataka — all bordering Maharashtra.
- Later, when a **four-member committee was formed by both States**, Maharashtra expressed willingness to transfer predominantly Kannada-speaking 260 villages with a population of about 3.25 lakh and total area of 1,160 square miles.
 - This was in lieu of accepting its demand for 814 villages and three urban settlements, which was turned down by Karnataka.
- **Basis of Maharashtra's Claim:**
 - Maharashtra's claim to seek the readjustment of its border **was on the basis of contiguity, relative linguistic majority and wishes of the people**. If the claim over Belagavi and surrounding areas was based on Marathi-speaking people and linguistic homogeneity, it laid its claim over Karwar and Supa where Konkani is spoken by citing Konkani as a dialect of Marathi.
 - Its argument was **based on the theory of villages being the unit for calculation** and enumerated linguistic population in each village. Maharashtra also points out the historical fact that the revenue records in these Marathi-speaking areas are also kept in Marathi.
- **Karnataka's Position:**
 - Karnataka has argued that the **settlement of boundaries as per the States Reorganisation Act is final**.
 - The boundary of the State was neither tentative nor flexible. The State argues that the **issue would reopen border issues** that have not been contemplated under the Act, and that such a demand should not be permitted.
- **Steps Taken to Resolve the Issue:**
 - In 1960, **both States agreed to set up a four-man committee** with two representatives from each State. Except on the issue of contiguity, the committee could not arrive at a unanimous decision.
 - Between the 1960s and 1980s, chief ministers of Karnataka and Maharashtra have met several times to find a solution to the vexed issue but with no avail.
- **Response of Union Government:**
 - The central government constituted the **Mahajan Committee in 1966** to assess the situation. Representatives from both sides, Maharashtra and the then Mysore state were part of the committee.
 - In **1967**, the committee recommended that **some villages in Karwar, Haliyal and Suparna talukas of Karnataka be given to Maharashtra but left Belagavi with the southern state**.
- **Response of the Supreme Court:**
 - In 2006, the **Supreme Court held that the issue should be resolved through mutual negotiation** and that linguistic criterion should not be considered as it may create more practical problems.
 - The case is **still being heard by the Supreme Court**.
- **Other Border Disputes between Different States:**
 - [Boundary issue between Assam and Mizoram](#)
 - [Odisha's Border Disputes](#)

Reorganization of States in India

- At the time of independence in 1947, **India consisted of nearly 550 disjointed princely states**.
- In 1950, the Constitution contained a four-fold classification of the states of the Indian Union—Part A, Part B, Part C and Part D States.
 - **Part-A** states comprised nine erstwhile governor's provinces of British India.
 - **Part-B** states consisted of nine erstwhile princely states with legislatures.
 - **Part-C** states consisted of the erstwhile chief commissioner's province of British India and some of the erstwhile princely states.
 - **Part-D** state comprised the Andaman and Nicobar Islands only.
- The grouping of states at the time was done **on the basis of political and historical considerations rather than on linguistic or cultural divisions**, but this was a temporary arrangement.

- On account of the multilingual nature and differences that existed between various states, there was a need for the states to be reorganized on a permanent basis.
- In this context, **in 1948, SK Dhar committee** - was appointed by the government to look into the need for the reorganization of states on a linguistic basis.
 - The Commission **preferred reorganisation of states on the basis of administrative convenience** including historical and geographical considerations instead of on linguistic lines.
 - This created much resentment and led to the appointment of another Linguistic Provinces Committee.
- **In December 1948, the JVP Committee** comprising Jawaharlal Nehru, Vallabh Bhai Patel and Pattabhi Sitaramayya was formed to study the issue.
 - The Committee, in its report submitted in April 1949, rejected the idea of reorganisation of states on a linguistic basis but said that the issue could be looked at afresh in the light of public demand.
- However, due to protests, **in October 1953, the Government of India created the first linguistic state, known as Andhra state**, by separating the Telugu speaking areas from the Madras state.
- On **22nd December 1953**, Jawaharlal Nehru **appointed a commission under Fazl Ali** to consider the reorganisation of states.
 - The commission submitted its report in 1955 and it suggested that the whole country be divided into 16 states and three centrally administered areas.
- The government, while not agreeing with the recommendations entirely, **divided the country into 14 states and 6 union territories under the States Reorganisation Act that was passed in November 1956.**
- Even after the large-scale reorganization of the states in 1956, the political map of India underwent continuous changes due to the pressure of popular agitations and political conditions.
- On 5th August 2019, President of India in the exercise of the powers conferred by **Clause (1) of Article 370 of the Constitution** had issued the Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order, 2019.
 - This divided the state of Jammu and Kashmir into two new Union Territories (UTs): Jammu & Kashmir, and Ladakh.
- Recently, **Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu (Merger of Union Territories) Act, 2019** has merged the Union Territories (UTs) of Daman and Diu (D&D) and Dadra and Nagar Haveli (DNH).
- Presently, India **comprises 28 states and 8 union territories.**

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