



## Dangerous conflagration

Following a dangerous and avoidable escalation of an otherwise dormant border dispute, five policemen and a civilian from Assam were killed in the Mizo border town of Vairengte in clashes between police from the State and their counterparts in Mizoram.

### Highlights:

1. The sequence of events, beginning October 2020, suggests that what began as skirmishes between residents close to the disputed border between Assam's Cachar and Mizoram's Kolasib districts has snowballed into a violent confrontation between police and residents.
2. The events point to a failure of the constitutional machinery, empowered to de-escalate tensions at the border. The presence of central paramilitary forces should have helped maintain the peace, but it is curiously not the case.
3. Both Chief Ministers have been exchanging allegations on Twitter, seeking the intervention of Union Home Minister Amit Shah, and using videos to tell a story that suited their version of the events — a farcical means of communication.
4. This also occurred just days after both Chief Ministers (along with others) met with Mr Shah to discuss the resolution of inter-State border disputes.

### The bane of the North-eastern States

1. Sectarian tribalism has been the bane of the North-eastern States, with underdevelopment acting as a catalyst in complicating knotty issues over land and other issues in the region.
2. There is no sure-shot and quick solution possible to the border disputes between various States without a spirit of giving and take and a civic engagement brokered by the Union government.
3. A resort to one-upmanship will only prolong the disputes and harden stances.

The Home Ministry must ensure that the Assam-Mizoram border situation is the first subject to de-escalation and steps taken to return to the status quo that prevailed before the skirmishes began in October 2020 with the cooperation of the respective States.



## Needed: an anti-trafficking law

No nation can call itself civilised if it tolerates the buying and selling of its daughters.

### A comprehensive Bill

1. Bachpan Bachao Andolan (BBA) and various civil society groups have campaigned for decades for a strong law to end this menace of human trafficking.
2. The Government of India has proposed the Trafficking in Persons (Prevention, Care and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2021. This Bill aims to tackle all aspects of trafficking including the social and economic causes of the crime, punishment to traffickers, and the protection and rehabilitation of survivors.
3. This is achievable if the Bill has the necessary checks and balances against potential misuse of power by agencies, periodic reviews of the law, and adequate allocation of resources for effective implementation.
4. The government must include these crucial provisions in the Bill and facilitate its smooth passage in the current session of Parliament.

### A problem worsened by COVID

1. COVID-19 has further intensified the need for the law. Traffickers are taking advantage of prolonged school closures and loss of family livelihood. BBA with government agencies has rescued almost 9,000 children from trafficking since the first lockdown.
2. In comparison, about half this number of children were rescued during the same time period of 14 months preceding the pandemic. The gravity of the situation cannot be undermined.
3. We will not recover from the effects of the pandemic without the wherewithal to address its human impact, which comes with this law and its associated budgets.

### Black Hole of Human trafficking

1. Human trafficking is a crime in itself, but it is also the propeller of several other crimes. It creates a parallel black economy that fuels child labour, child marriage, prostitution, bonded labour, forced beggary, drug-related crimes, corruption, terrorism and other illicit businesses.

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2. The architects of our Constitution established the severity of the crime of trafficking by making it the only offence punishable under the Constitution of India itself, besides untouchability.
3. A strong anti-trafficking law is the moral and constitutional responsibility of our elected leaders, and a necessary step towards nation-building and economic progress.
4. It is non-negotiable for the realisation of an India that our Constitution-makers envisioned, our freedom fighters struggled for, our soldiers die for, and our children deserve.