

FAQs

Karnataka-Maharashtra border Dispute

Q What is the context?

A The eruption of strong language chauvinism on the border of Karnataka and Maharashtra is neither sudden nor primarily linguistic. The number of speakers of both of Marathi and Kannada languages has been overwhelmingly large. If it is not language, is it the sudden memory of a badly mangled territorial border that has irked people?

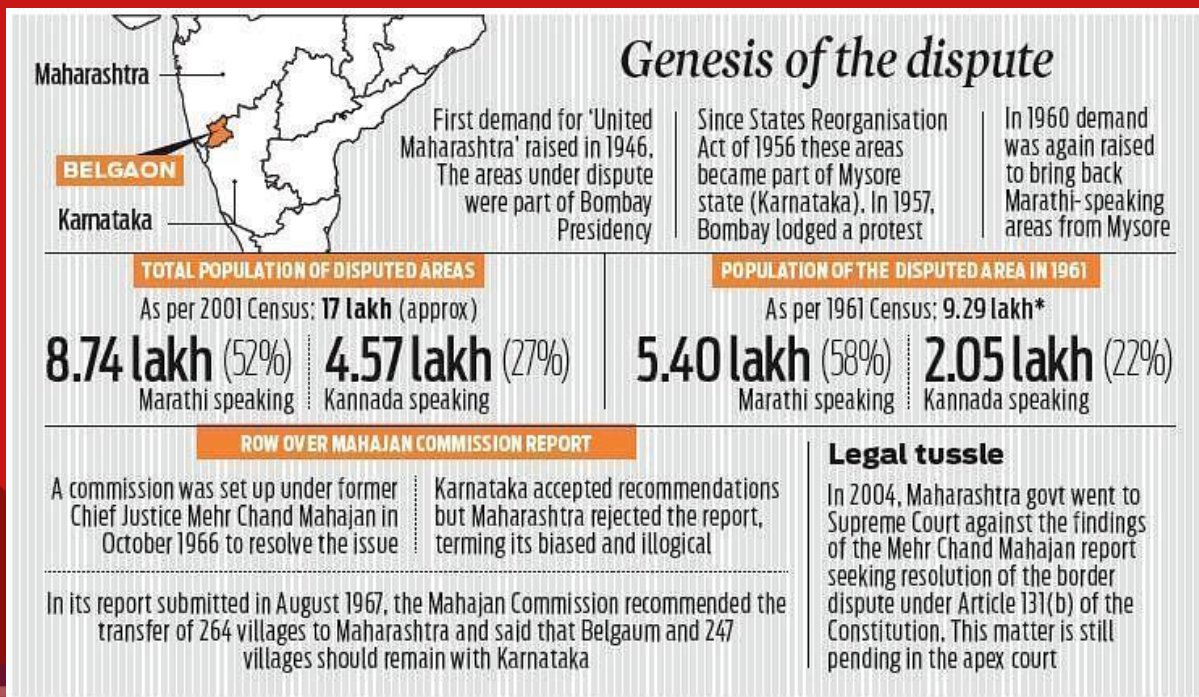


Q What is the dispute in short?

A

- A petition filed by the Maharashtra government, challenging some provisions of the State Reorganisation Act, 1956 and demanding 865 villages from five districts of Karnataka. The five districts are Belagavi, Karwar, Vijayapura, Kalaburagi and Bidar.,
- In Karnataka, tensions are high, especially in Belagavi district, which borders Maharashtra

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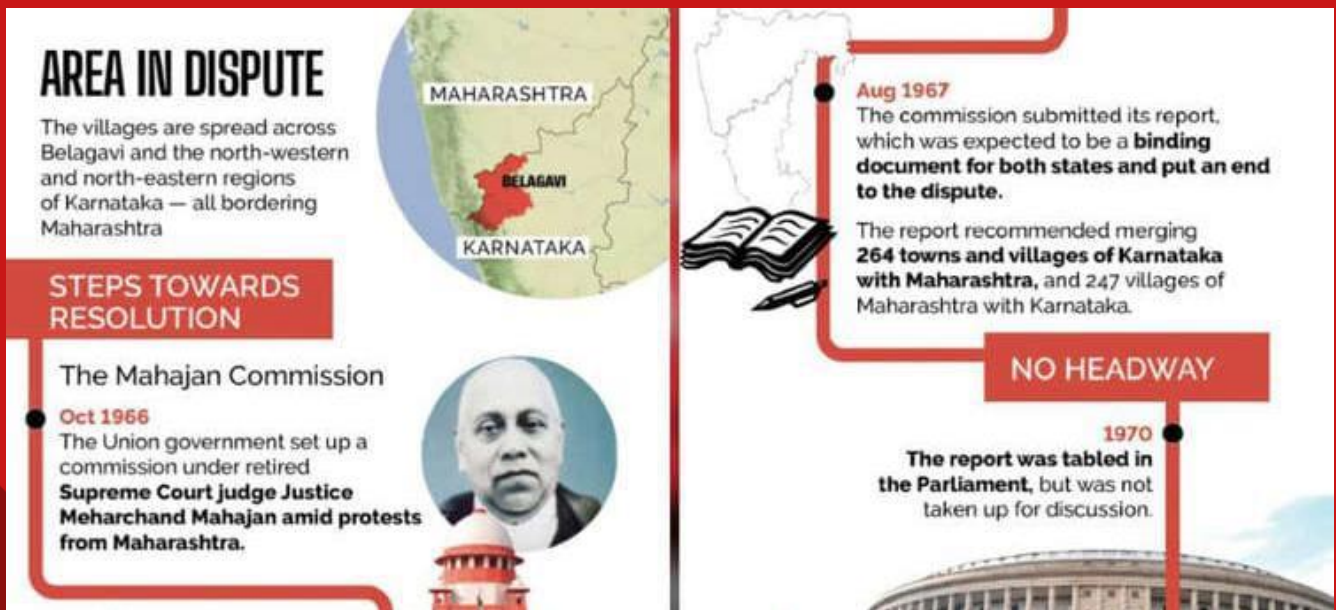


Q When did the dispute begin?

A

- **Since the State Reorganisation Act passed in 1956:** Maharashtra and Karnataka have sparred over the inclusion of some towns and villages along the state border ever since the State Reorganisation Act was passed by the Parliament in 1956. The Act was based on the findings of the Justice Fazal Ali Commission, which was appointed in 1953 and submitted its report two years later.
- **Erstwhile Mysore renamed and formed State of Karnataka and the differences erupted:** On November 1, 1956, Mysore state later renamed Karnataka was formed, and differences between the state and the neighbouring Bombay state later Maharashtra erupted.
- **View of Maharashtra:** Maharashtra was of the view that the northwestern district of Karnataka, Belagavi, should be part of the state, leading to a decade-long violent agitation and formation of Maharashtra Ekikaran Samithi (MES), which still holds sway in parts of the district and the eponymous city

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Q What was the Centre's response?

A

- **Union government set up a Commission in 1966:** Amid protests and pressure from Maharashtra, the Union government set up a commission under retired Supreme Court judge Justice Meharchand Mahajan on October 25, 1966. S Nijalingappa was the Karnataka Chief minister then and VP Nayak was his Maharashtra counterpart.
- **Report came up with a settlement on merging of towns and villages:** The report was expected to be a binding document for both states and put an end to the dispute. The commission submitted its report in August 1967, where it recommended merging 264 towns and villages of Karnataka (including Nippani, Nandgad and Khanapur) with Maharashtra, and 247 villages of Maharashtra (including South Solapur and Akkalkot) with Karnataka.
- **Report tabled in 1970 but no implementation took place as it became a poll issue:** Though the report was tabled in 1970 in the Parliament, it was not taken up for discussion. Without the implementation of the recommendations, demands of Marathi-speaking regions to be part of Maharashtra and Kannada-speaking regions to be part of Karnataka continued to grow. MES made it a poll issue in many parts of Belagavi and won successive elections from constituencies in the district.

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Q What is Bilingualism in this area ?

A

- **Extended families on both sides:** The castes and communities on both sides of the disputed border have their extended families spread on either side of it.
- **Harmonious Cultural exchange:** All of the harmoniums and sitars played by the greatest among Karnataka's singers have been made in Maharashtra's Miraj town for the last 120 years.
- **Influence of Bhakti movement on one another:** In the past, the bhajans of Tukaram have made their way into the hearts of the Kannada speakers with as much ease as did the vachanas of Basaveshwar's saint-followers into the minds of Marathi speakers.
- **Influence of one another's language:** Thousands of Marathi words are of Kannada origin and a similar number of words in Kannada have assimilated the Indo-Aryan roots through Marathi.

Q What is the Critique of dispute ?

A

- **Dispute is visible but not in the essence:** The dispute is in the name of language, but it is not linguistic in essence. It is in the name of a border, but it is not territorial in essence.
- **The dispute is becoming more of a political demand:** People know that the area will see disturbance when politicians want to unleash it. Appealing to language chauvinism acquires an instrumentalist-political demand.
- **Diverting the discontent:** The truth is, neither the language nor the people along the state border are an issue for them, as they should be. What matters to the political warlords is to find a way of diverting the discontent, no matter what harm it brings to the harmony of communities in the area.

Q What can be the Conclusion ?

A

- Almost two decades after the petition, its maintainability remains challenged. Karnataka has resorted to Article 3 of the Indian Constitution to argue that the Supreme Court does not have the jurisdiction to decide the borders of states, and only Parliament has the power to do so. Maharashtra has referred to Article 131 of the Constitution, which says that the Supreme Court has jurisdiction in cases related to disputes between the Union government and states.