

Tuesday, Nov 22, 2022

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Assam Police open fire near Meghalaya village; 6 killed

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Written by [Debraj Deb](#), [Deeptiman Tiwary](#)

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 **NewsGuard**

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Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad Sangma “strongly condemned” the incident, saying the Assam Police and Assam Forest Guard had purportedly entered Meghalaya and “resorted to unprovoked firing”. (File)

SIX PERSONS, including an Assam Forest Guard, were killed and several others injured in a clash between Assam Police and a mob early on Tuesday over an alleged timber-smuggling attempt near a village in Meghalaya, officials said.

In Premium | Assam-Meghalaya border: the dispute, and what’s been settled

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In a statement, the office of Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad Sangma said that a State Cabinet delegation will meet Union Home Minister Amit Shah on November 24 to demand an investigation into the incident by the NIA or CBI.

Sources in the Ministry of Home Affairs said the Centre is keeping a close watch on the situation. "As of now, it is under control," an official said.

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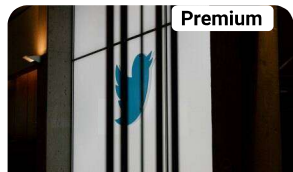


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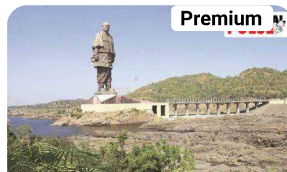
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The concern in Delhi is that the incident has the potential to derail the Assam-Meghalaya talks or delay a resolution in the border dispute between the two states. In March, the chief ministers of the two states had signed a pact in the presence of Shah to resolve a part of their five-decade-old tussle.

On Tuesday, Assam Police said they opened fire in self defence during the clash, which they linked to an alleged attempt at timber smuggling. Four persons were

killed, including the Forest Guard, they said. The Assam government has formed a one-member commission to probe the incident and submit a report within three months. It also issued a border alert.

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Meghalaya Chief Minister Sangma said that while four persons died at the spot, two more succumbed to injuries in hospital later. Five of those killed were from Meghalaya, he said. Describing the “unprovoked firing” by Assam Police as “inhuman”, he said the state will also set up a judicial commission — and a Special Investigation Team, which will probe the incident until a central agency takes over.

EXPLAINED

Old history of border dispute

Assam and Meghalaya have a longstanding dispute in 12 stretches of the 884-km-long shared border. The two states had agreed in March to resolve part of their border dispute. In August, they decided to form regional committees. The second round of discussions was set to commence by the end of this month.

Sangma also described the incident as “unfortunate” in a tweet tagging Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#), Assam Chief Minister Hemanta Biswa Sarma and Shah.



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West Karbi Anglong SP Imdad Ali said Assam Police fired on a truck carrying illegal timber after it tried to flee across the state border, chased it after puncturing one of its tyres, and detained three men from the vehicle. A police team, which was dispatched to bring the truck back from the spot, came under attack from an armed mob, the officer said.

Chief Minister Sangma said he has been assured of cooperation in probing the incident by his Assam counterpart. “The OC of Ziriking Police Station who was involved in the incident has been suspended, the Forest Range Protection Officer in charge of the area and who was a part of the incident has been suspended, the SP of West Karbi Anglong has been transferred,” Sangma said, citing details of his conversation over the phone with Sarma.

The Assam Chief Minister is yet to react to the incident. Sangma, meanwhile, cited reports to say that “a truck carrying timber was pursued by Assam Forest Guards with Assam Police, and detained by (them) at Mukroh village”. “On hearing about this, people from Mukroh gathered in large numbers and surrounded the Assam Police and Assam Forest Guards. This led to firing by the Assam Police,” he said.

“The government of Meghalaya will take all steps to ensure that justice is done and action is taken against all those responsible for this inhuman act,” he said.

The Meghalaya government has decided to cancel all official festivals until November 30, including the Cherry Blossom Festival, as a mark of respect for those killed. It has also announced an ex-gratia compensation of Rs 5 lakh each for the families of the victims.

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Officials said two persons died at the Barato Primary Health Centre and Ialong civil hospital at Jowai in Meghalaya. Those injured are being treated at these facilities, they said.

Meghalaya's Home Minister Lahkmen Rymbui and senior officials have reached the spot, officials said. While an [FIR](#) was registered by the Meghalaya Police, the state's Cabinet met to discuss the incident, they said. The state government will also submit a report to the National Human Rights Commission, officials said.

Meghalaya Home Secretary C V D Diengdoh later issued a notification barring mobile internet services "for the next 48 hours beginning from 10:30 am on 22nd November, 2022 in the seven districts of Meghalaya, namely West Jaintia Hills, East Jaintia Hills, East Khasi Hills, Ri-Bhoi, Eastern West Khasi Hills, West Khasi Hills and South West Khasi Hills districts".

The Assam-Meghalaya pact was seen as a major achievement as Assam's border disputes with other states in the Northeast have remained unresolved despite multiple rounds of talks. Last year, the border dispute between Assam and Mizoram led to clashes between their police forces, leading to five Assam policemen being killed and a bullet injury to the SP of Cachar district.

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