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Assam, Arunachal ink MoU to resolve decades-long boundary dispute

The two states have been in discussions to resolve the border dispute with Himanta Biswa Sarma and Pema Khandu signing the Namsai Declaration on July 15 last year.

Written by [Sukrita Baruah](#)[Follow](#)

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Union Home Minister Amit Shah with Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma (L) and Arunachal Pradesh CM Pema Khandu during signing of the boundary agreement between the two states. (PTI)

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In a move that both Assam and Arunachal Pradesh say would put to rest an issue festering for nearly five decades, **Chief Ministers of the two states signed a Memorandum of Understanding over disputed areas along the roughly 800-km shared boundary.**

The MoU was signed by Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma and his Arunachal Pradesh counterpart Pema KHandu in the presence of Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Law Minister Kiren Rijiju at the North Block. Shah called it a “historic occasion”.

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The dispute in question is over 123 villages that stretch across 12 districts of Arunachal Pradesh and eight of Assam. These villages had been claimed by Arunachal Pradesh in 2007, before a Supreme Court-appointed Local Commission to identify the boundary between the two states.

As per the MoU signed, disputes over 34 of these villages stand resolved. The disputes over 37 villages had been resolved through the Namsai Declaration of July 2022, in which the two CMs “agreed on principle over them”.

The exercise to resolve the dispute started last year with the formation of 12 regional committees from both states. The suggestions made by these committees have been accepted by the two states, Home Ministry officials said.

According to the MoU, the state governments agree that no new claim area or village will be added in future beyond these 123 villages. It also states that both governments “agree to effectively prevent any new encroachment in the border areas”, and agree that the MoU is “full and final” in respect to the 123 villages.

“We are witness to a historic moment today. The Local Commission report of 1972 remained disputed at various levels, sometimes at the level of the government, sometimes in the Supreme Court,” Shah said. “By accepting the report, the two states have ended the dispute over the 800 km of boundary.... This is a huge achievement.”

He added, “I believe the work that should have been done immediately after Independence is being done now.”

Of 71 villages over which an understanding has been reached, one village from Arunachal Pradesh will be included in Assam, 10 villages will continue to be in Assam, and 60 villages from Assam will be included in Arunachal Pradesh.

“Of the remaining 52 villages, the village boundary of 49 is to be finalised by the regional committees in next six months, while three villages inside the IAF bombing

Formal talks over the issue had begun between Sarma and Khandu in January 2022. Following their second meeting in April 2022, it was resolved to set up 12 district-level committees to undertake joint surveys in the disputed areas to find solutions based on “historical perspective, ethnicity, contiguity, people’s will and administrative convenience of both states”.

Sarma said: “For 50 years, our states have had a border dispute. We say it is about 123 villages but these villages are spread across the entire boundary stretched over 800 km... I would like to thank the Arunachal government because in our Jorhat city there is a historically very large land stretch of Arunachal Pradesh. After arriving at the agreement, as a goodwill gesture, the Arunachal government took the decision to give the right to that land to Assam.”

Calling it a “historic MoU”, Khandu said, “It’s an issue that has been going on for around 50 years.... I must thank Assam CM Himanta-Dada, it is because of his political will that this has happened.... With this resolution of 123 villages, the peaceful coexistence between Assam and Arunachal will only increase.”

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Long history of dispute

The Assam-Arunachal Pradesh boundary is the longest inter-state border in the Northeast, and it has seen frequent flare-ups over disputes since the 1990s. Made a UT in 1972, Arunachal Pradesh contended that several forested tracts in the plains that had traditionally belonged to hill tribal chiefs and communities were

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1987, a separate committee was appointed, which recommended that certain territories be transferred from Assam to Arunachal. Assam contested this and the matter is in the Supreme Court.

Inputs from ENS, New Delhi

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