

Assam's Eviction Drives - The Ripple Effect in Northeast India

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Assam's Eviction Drives Latest News

- The **Assam government's intensified eviction drive** targeting alleged encroachments on forest and government lands, particularly by Bengali-speaking Muslims, has sparked **political controversy and raised regional tensions**, affecting inter-State relations in Northeast India.

Genesis and Timeline of Eviction Drives

- **State government's political commitment:**
 - The current government came to power in Assam in 2016, with the slogan to protect jaati (community), maati (land), and bheti (hearth).
 - The first eviction drive began in September **2016, following a Gauhati High Court order** to reclaim forestlands near Kaziranga National Park.
- **Subsequent developments:**

- A major incident in 2021 at Gorukhuti in Darrang district resulted in two deaths, raising **concerns over human rights**.
- The drive resumed in June 2025, coinciding with corruption charges against the current government, including **alleged irregularities in a Gir cow distribution scheme at Gorukhuti**.

Socio-Political Roots of the Eviction Policy

- **Long-standing narrative:**
 - Evictions are part of a **broader anti-infiltration narrative** targeting Bengali-speaking Muslims — often derogatorily labeled as “Bangladeshi” or “Miya”.
 - The party in government accuses the previous government of allowing illegal settlement for **vote-bank politics**.
- **Historical backdrop:**
 - Assam’s political discourse has been shaped by the **Assam Agitation** (1979–1985).
 - The **Assam Accord** set March 24, 1971, as the cut-off date for identifying and deporting illegal immigrants.

Intensification and Polarisation

- **Aggressive measures:**
 - The eviction has affected not only Muslims but also non-Muslim communities.
 - **Silsako Beel** – a major wetland in Guwahati, saw demolition of houses of 130 families, including non-Muslims in 2022.
 - Between 2016 and July 2025, at least five people have died during these drives.
- **Rhetoric and data justification:** CM Himanta Biswa Sarma refers to “**land jihad**” and claims that
 - 15,288.52 bighas of satra (Vaishnav monastery) land are encroached by people of doubtful citizenship.
 - 3,620.9 sq km of forestland under encroachment (as of March 2024).
- **Exemptions and resettlements:**
 - **The Forest Rights Act 2006** protections apply to tribal dwellers before 2005.
 - **Ahom families** evicted along with Muslims were fast-tracked for resettlement.

Regional Impact and Neighbouring States’ Reaction

- **Northeast States on alert:**
 - **Neighbouring states**—Nagaland, Manipur, Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, and Mizoram—have heightened border vigilance.
 - **Nagaland NGOs** accused Assam of pushing evictees into their territory.
- **Preventive actions:**
 - **Nagaland police** intercepted 200 vehicles carrying suspected illegal migrants.
 - Some **extremist groups** in Nagaland formed task forces to patrol borders.
 - **Inner Line Permit** issuance was made stricter by bordering States.

Evictions and Inter-State Border Disputes

- **Encroachments and claims:**

- The issue ties into **unresolved border disputes** among NE States, especially where migrants have allegedly settled.
- 83,000 hectares of Assam's land reportedly occupied by **Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Meghalaya**.

- **Mutual allegations:**

- Other States **accuse Assam of using migrants** to settle disputed border lands.
- In turn, they have evicted suspected migrants, pushing them back to Assam.

- **Judicial intervention:** On July 30, 2025, the Gauhati High Court ordered all five States to form **high-level committees for coordinated eviction from forestlands**.

Conclusion

- The Assam eviction drive is **not just an administrative exercise but a highly politicised and regionally sensitive issue** with implications for inter-State relations, ethnic tensions, and borderland governance in the Northeast.
- It underscores the delicate balance between **land rights, environmental conservation, identity politics, and human rights**.

Source: **TH**

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