

2. Tussle Over Belgaum

Prelims Level: Polity and Governance – Boundary Issues.

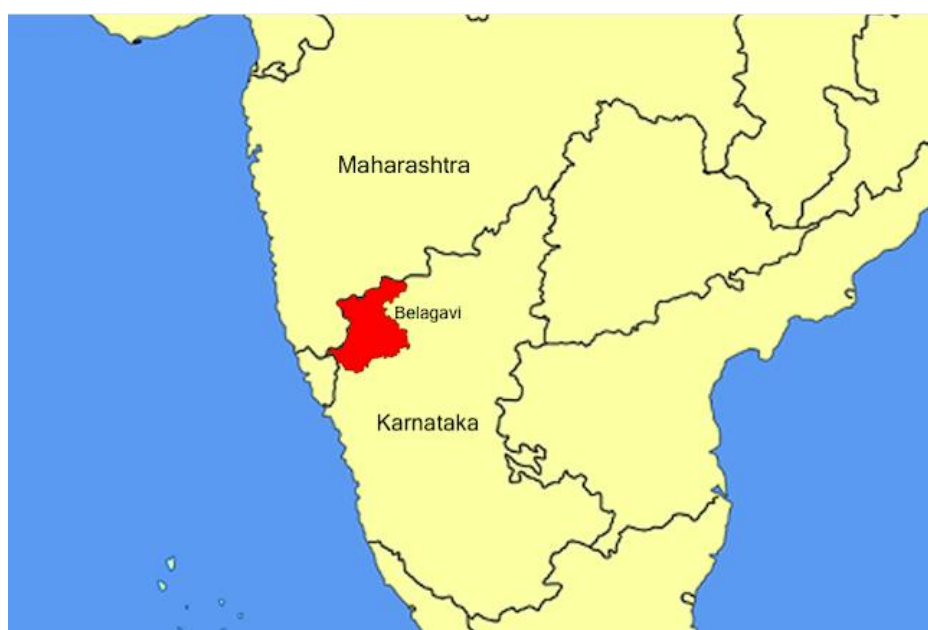
Mains Level: GS-II Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States, issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure.

Why in News?

- The rising tension along the Maharashtra- Karnataka border recently has brought back the border dispute over Belgaum into limelight again. The border dispute between Maharashtra and Karnataka over Belagavi district is a longstanding issue. Let's discuss the issue in brief in this article.

Background:

- After India's Independence, there was demand for the formation of states on linguistic lines. Accordingly, the States Reorganization committee was formed. The Committee recommended for the formation of states on linguistic lines, while keeping in mind the administration efficiency.
- Based upon recommendations of this committee, Belgaum was included in the Karnataka State in the year 1956. This was done so, because in the year 1881, Kannada Speaking population comprised the majority and the Marathi speaking population comprised of only around 25%.
- Subsequently, the Maharashtra Government objected to the inclusion of Marathi-speaking areas under Karnataka and petitioned the Centre to set up a committee to look into the issue.



Arguments and Counter Arguments of Both States:

- **Claims of Maharashtra:**

- ✓ Maharashtra claims Belgaum district mainly on the grounds of geographical contiguity, relative linguistic majority and wishes of the people.
- ✓ It has also laid claim over Karwar (a city in Uttara Kananda District) where Konkani is spoken by citing Konkani as a dialect of Marathi.
- ✓ Maharashtra has also claimed these areas on historical grounds by pointing out that the revenue records in these areas were kept in Marathi during the British era.

- **Stance of Karnataka:**

- ✓ It has argued that the settlement of boundaries as per the States Reorganisation Act should be treated as final.
- ✓ The State argues that the issue would reopen border issues that have not been contemplated under the Act, and that such a demand should not be permitted.

Mahajan Committee on Border Dispute:

- Recommendations: In order to resolve the border dispute, the Central Government appointed Mahajan Committee in 1960.
- The committee recommended for the following:
 1. Continued Inclusion of Belgaum city in Karnataka.
 2. Around 247 villages/places from Maharashtra such as Sholapur should be transferred to Karnataka.
 3. Around 264 villages/places from Karnataka such as Nippani, Khanapur should be transferred to Maharashtra
 4. Transfer of Kasaragod District from Kerala to Karnataka.
- Both Maharashtra and Kerala Government rejected the recommendations of the committee. The Maharashtra Government termed the report biased and insisted that the report is against the wishes of the people of Belgaum. On the other hand, Kerala Government refused to hand over Kasaragod.