

ASSAM RIFLES – INTERNAL SECURITY

NEWS: Recently, a ceremonial transfer of land between Assam Rifles and Mizoram government took place to mark the relocation of paramilitary force.

WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?

Ceremonial Land Transfer Between Assam Rifles & Mizoram Government

Key Event Overview

1. A **ceremonial land transfer event** took place on **March 15, 2025**, to mark the relocation of the **Assam Rifles' base from Aizawl city center to Zokhawsang**, a location situated **15 km away from Aizawl**.
2. The event was attended by several key dignitaries, including **Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Assam Rifles Director General (DG) L-G Vikas Lakhera, Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma**, and other senior representatives from the **Mizoram state government and Assam Rifles**.
3. **During the ceremony, two maps were exchanged** between Assam Rifles and Mizoram government officials:
 - One map depicted the **newly designated location for Assam Rifles at Zokhawsang**.
 - The other map showed the **land that would be transferred back to the Mizoram government** in Aizawl.
4. **The actual transfer of land is scheduled to take place in April 2025**, following the finalization of agreements. A **memorandum of agreement (MoA)** regarding this transfer was officially signed between **Assam Rifles and the Mizoram government in October 2023**.
5. **Land Transfer Details:**
 - **Assam Rifles will hand over approximately 106.853 acres of land** in Aizawl to the Mizoram government.
 - **In exchange, the Mizoram government has leased 1305.15 acres of land** in Zokhawsang to Assam Rifles for their new base.

Significance of Relocation

1. **Urban Development & Decongestion:** Mizoram Chief Minister **Lalduhoma emphasized that the relocation of Assam Rifles would significantly reduce congestion in Aizawl**, freeing up land for **urban development and infrastructure improvement**.
2. **Strategic Utilization of Space:** The CM highlighted that **valuable land in the heart of the city would now be available for public use**, improving **traffic conditions, urban planning, and overall quality of life for residents**.

3. **Long-Standing Demand:** The demand for Assam Rifles' relocation **dates back to the tenure of former Mizoram Chief Minister Laldenga**, who led the **Mizo National Front (MNF)**.
4. **Historical Context:**
 - The demand was raised **soon after Mizoram attained full statehood in 1987**, following **two decades of insurgency and unrest in the region**.
 - The move is seen as a **symbolic and practical step towards addressing long-pending regional aspirations**.

Assam Rifles: Structure, Role & Administrative Control

Organizational Structure of Assam Rifles

1. **Assam Rifles is one of the six Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) operating under the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).**
2. **Other five CAPFs include:**
 - **Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF)**
 - **Border Security Force (BSF)**
 - **Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP)**
 - **Central Industrial Security Force (CISF)**
 - **Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB)**
3. **Unique Dual Control Structure:**
 - The **administrative control** of Assam Rifles lies with the **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)**.
 - However, **its operational control is managed by the Indian Army**, which functions under the **Ministry of Defence (MoD)**.
4. **Primary Responsibilities of Assam Rifles:**
 - **Maintaining law and order** in the Northeast region of India, often in coordination with the Indian Army.
 - **Guarding the Indo-Myanmar border**, ensuring border security and preventing illegal activities.
5. **Command & Headquarters:**
 - Assam Rifles is commanded by a **Lieutenant General from the Indian Army**.

- The **Directorate General of Assam Rifles (HQ DGAR)** is headquartered in **Shillong**, which is unique, as other CAPFs have their headquarters in **New Delhi**.

6. **Operational Management & Personnel Policies:**

- **Recruitment, perks, promotions, and retirement policies** for Assam Rifles personnel are governed by the **Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)**, following CAPF norms.
- However, **deployment, postings, transfers, and deputations** of Assam Rifles personnel are controlled by the **Indian Army**, leading to administrative complexities.

7. **Ongoing Debate on Administrative Control:**

- There is a long-standing demand from both **Assam Rifles personnel and the Ministries (MoD & MHA)** to bring the force under a single ministry for better operational efficiency.

Historical Evolution of Assam Rifles: From Colonial Era to Modern-Day Sentinel

Colonial Origins & Early History (1835-1917)

1. Assam Rifles was originally founded in **1835 as the Cachar Levy**, with **approximately 750 men**.
2. It was initially raised to **protect British tea plantations and settlements from tribal raids** in the Northeast.
3. **Later, it was restructured and renamed the Assam Frontier Force**, expanding its role to **conduct cross-border punitive operations** beyond Assam.
4. **Formation of Assam Military Police Battalions (1870):**
 - The force was further reorganized into **three separate Assam Military Police Battalions**, named after different regions:
 - **Lushai Hills Battalion**
 - **Lakhimpur Battalion**
 - **Naga Hills Battalion**
 - Later, the **Darrang Battalion** was added before World War I.

World Wars & Recognition (1917-1945)

1. **In 1917, the force was officially renamed "Assam Rifles"** for its contributions during World War I.
2. **During World War I, more than 3,000 men from Assam Rifles served in combat operations** in Europe and the Middle East.
3. **World War II Contributions:**

- During the **Japanese invasion of Burma (1942-1945)**, Assam Rifles played a critical role in **rear-guard actions and guerrilla warfare operations**.
- **The force was awarded 48 gallantry medals** for its service during World War II.

Post-Independence Operations & Achievements

1. **1962 Sino-Indian War:** Assam Rifles took part in **combat operations against China**, securing key areas.
2. **1987 Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) Mission in Sri Lanka:** Participated in **Operation Pawan**, assisting in counter-insurgency operations.
3. **Counter-Insurgency & Border Security:** Assam Rifles remains **actively engaged in anti-insurgency operations across Northeast India** and provides **security along the Indo-Myanmar border**.
4. **Most Decorated Paramilitary Force:** Assam Rifles holds the **highest number of gallantry awards** among India's paramilitary forces, including:
 - **Shaurya Chakras, Kirti Chakras, Vir Chakras, Ashok Chakras, and Sena Medals.**

Beyond Assam Rifles: Revamped Assam Police Academy & Lachit Borphukan's Legacy

Revamping of Assam Police Academy

1. On **March 15, 2025**, Home Minister **Amit Shah** inaugurated the **first phase of a newly modernized police academy** in **Dergaon, Assam**.
2. The academy has been renamed in honor of **Ahom general Lachit Borphukan**, recognizing his **military genius and contributions to Assamese history**.

Lachit Borphukan: The Hero of Assam

1. **Lachit Borphukan was a legendary military commander of the Ahom Kingdom**, known for his strategic brilliance and bravery.
2. He was appointed **one of the five Borphukans (governors) of the Ahom kingdom** and held **administrative, judicial, and military responsibilities**.
3. **Famous for the Battle of Saraighat (1671)**, where he **defeated Mughal forces led by Raja Ramsingh-I**, preventing the Mughal annexation of Assam.
4. He is celebrated as a **symbol of Assamese valor, intelligence, and patriotism**.
5. **Every year, November 24 is observed as "Lachit Diwas"** to honor his legacy and commemorate his birth anniversary.

Source: <https://indianexpress.com/article/upsc-current-affairs/upsc-essentials/knowledge-nugget-assam-rifles-mizoram-upsc-prelims-exam-2025-9889008/>

PLACES IN NEWS:

YEMEN AND THE RED SEA

Geographical Location of Yemen

- Yemen is located in the **southwestern part of the Arabian Peninsula**, making it a key country in the region.
- It shares both **land and maritime borders** with important neighbors and waterways, influencing trade and security dynamics.

Borders of Yemen

- **North:** Yemen is bordered by **Saudi Arabia**, the largest country on the Arabian Peninsula. This border has significant geopolitical importance due to the ongoing conflict between Saudi Arabia and the Houthi rebels.
- **East:** Yemen shares a border with **Oman**, another Gulf country. The Oman-Yemen border is relatively stable compared to Yemen's northern frontier.
- **South:** Yemen's southern coastline meets the **Arabian Sea and the Gulf of Aden**, both of which are vital for international trade and shipping.
- **West:** The **Red Sea** forms Yemen's western border, which includes the crucial **Bab el Mandeb Strait**, a strategic maritime chokepoint.

Strategic Importance of Yemen

- Yemen controls the **eastern shore of the Bab el Mandeb Strait**, which is one of the world's most critical maritime passages.
- This strait acts as a **gateway** for shipping routes connecting the **Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden and the Indian Ocean**.
- The strategic positioning of Yemen makes it a key player in **global trade, naval security, and energy transportation**.
- Any conflict or instability in Yemen directly impacts **international shipping, oil transportation, and regional security**.

Civil War in Yemen: Background and the Houthi Movement

Who Are the Houthis?

- The **Houthis** are a **Zaidi Shia** militant group originating from the **Sa'dah province** in northwestern Yemen.
- They are a large clan with deep historical and cultural roots in the region.
- Their movement started as a rebellion against the **Yemeni government** but later escalated into a full-fledged civil war.



Houthi Movement: Origins and Current Influence

- The movement originated in the **1990s** as a resistance group against the **long-time ruler of Yemen, President Ali Abdullah Saleh**.
- Over the years, the Houthis have **expanded their influence**, now controlling large parts of **northern Yemen**, including the capital **Sana'a**.
- Despite several military campaigns by the **Saudi-led coalition**, the Houthis remain a dominant force in Yemen.

Iran's Role in the Conflict

- **Iran provides significant support** to the Houthis, including **weapons, financial aid, and strategic backing**.
- This has made the Houthis an important **proxy force** for Iran in its regional power struggle against **Saudi Arabia**.
- Iran's involvement has intensified tensions between the Gulf states and **Western allies like the US and UK**.

Houthis' Support for Hamas

- Despite **sectarian differences** (Houthis are **Shia**, while Hamas is **Sunni**), they support Hamas due to their **shared opposition to the US and Israel**.
- This reflects a broader alliance of **anti-Western and anti-Israel forces** in the Middle East.

The Red Sea: Strategic and Geopolitical Importance

Significance of the Red Sea

- The **Red Sea** is one of the most **strategically important waterways** in the world, facilitating **global commerce and energy shipping**.
- It acts as a **maritime corridor** connecting major economic hubs in **Europe, the Middle East, and Asia**.

Connectivity and Trade Routes

- The Red Sea connects the **Mediterranean Sea** (via the **Suez Canal**) to the **Indian Ocean** (via the **Bab el Mandeb Strait**).
- This allows **European, African, and Asian markets** to be linked via a crucial maritime route.
- Major **oil and gas shipments** from the **Middle East** pass through the Red Sea, making it vital for the **global energy supply chain**.

Countries Bordering the Red Sea

- A useful **mnemonic** to remember the bordering countries is **SEED + Saudi Arabia & Yemen**:
 - **S** – **Sudan** (western shore)
 - **E** – **Egypt** (western shore)
 - **E** – **Eritrea** (western shore)
 - **D** – **Djibouti** (western shore)
 - **Saudi Arabia** (eastern shore)
 - **Yemen** (eastern shore)

Geological Features of the Red Sea

- The Red Sea is part of the **Great Rift Valley**, a major geological fault system that is slowly pulling the **African and Arabian plates apart**.
- The rifting process has created a **deep and narrow basin**, making the Red Sea one of the world's **youngest oceanic bodies**.

Key Straits in the Red Sea Region

1. Bab el Mandeb Strait

- **Location**: Southern entrance of the **Red Sea**, linking it to the **Gulf of Aden** and the **Indian Ocean**.
- **Strategic Importance**:
 - Acts as a **chokepoint for global trade**, with **oil and container shipments** passing through daily.

- Instability in Yemen can disrupt shipping, affecting **global markets and energy prices**.
- **Security Concerns:**
 - The **Houthi rebels have threatened** international shipping in this region, leading to heightened naval patrols.

2. Strait of Tiran

- **Location:** Northern end of the **Red Sea**, separating the **Sinai Peninsula (Egypt)** from **Saudi Arabia**.
- **Importance:**
 - Provides access to the **Gulf of Aqaba**, which is a critical waterway for **Jordan and Israel**.
 - Any blockage or restriction of this strait can impact **regional security and economic activities**.

Conclusion

- Yemen's **strategic location** and ongoing **civil war** have major implications for **regional stability, global trade, and international relations**.
- The **Red Sea and its chokepoints (Bab el Mandeb, Strait of Tiran)** are vital for maritime security and global commerce.
- The involvement of **major powers like Saudi Arabia, Iran, and the US** in Yemen's conflict further underscores its **global significance**.

Source: <https://indianexpress.com/article/world/us-launches-military-operation-iran-backed-houthis-in-yemen-red-sea-9888230/>