

PRAGNYA BHARATHI: Detailed News Analysis (DNA)

Topic : India-France Defence Relations

Relevance : GS Paper 2 International Relations

Source : The Hindu

Context :

Two mega deals with France wait for Cabinet panel nod

The Navy is keen that the defence agreements for 26 Rafale-M fighter jets and three more Scorpene-class conventional submarines, worth a total of \$11 billion, be inked this financial year

Dinakar Peri
NEW DELHI

Two mega defence deals with France – for 26 Rafale-M fighter jets and three more Scorpene-class conventional submarines – worth close to \$11 billion are now awaiting final approval by the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) before their anticipated conclusion very soon.

The Indian Navy will get to see up close the performance of the Rafale-M jets on the French aircraft carrier *Charles de Gaulle* as the carrier strike group currently in the Indian Ocean is scheduled to visit Goa next week for the bilateral Varuna exercise.

"All formalities have been completed and the case has been put up to the CCS for a couple of weeks now," an official confirmed on the deal for 26 Rafale-M jets. "Negotiations were done weeks back," the official said.

The Navy has been very keen that both deals be inked in this financial year ending March 31 so they are included in this year's Budget.

The Rafale-M deal is expected to be concluded in April when the French Defence Minister is expected



In union: Indian Air Force's six Rafale aircraft fly in 'Vajraang' formation during the 76th Republic Day parade at Kartavya Path in New Delhi on January 26. SHYKUNAR PUSHPAKAR

to visit India. As reported by *The Hindu* earlier, deliveries of the Rafale-M for the Indian Navy would begin in four years once the contract is signed.

Officials said that given that it is a government-to-government deal, funds earmarked in this fiscal budget can be rolled over to the next.

Follow-up agreement
Sources stated that the Scorpene deal is also complete in all respects. It is a follow-up to the earlier deal for six Scorpene submarines procured under Project-75 between Naval

Group of France and Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Ltd. (MDL).

If the deal is concluded next month, the Indian Navy would begin receiving from 2029 the Rafale-M jets and MQ-9B, an unmanned aerial vehicle with high altitude and long endurance features, contracted from the U.S.

On July 13, 2023 as Prime Minister Narendra Modi was en route to Paris, the Defence Acquisition Council chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh accorded Acceptance of Necessity for the procurement of 26 Rafale-M fight-

ers and three additional Scorpene-class diesel-electric submarines.

The 26 Rafale deal includes 22 single-seater Rafale-M and four twin-seater Rafale trainers (which are not carrier compatible). The 26 jets are meant to fill the gap in numbers till the indigenous Twin Engine Deck-Based Fighter, which is under development, is inducted into service. The Navy currently operates two aircraft carriers – *INS Vikramaditya* procured from Russia and the indigenously built *INS Vikrant* that was commissioned in September 2022.

Historical Perspective

India and France began strengthening defence ties in the 1980s. One of the earliest milestones was the acquisition of Mirage 2000 fighter jets in 1985. These jets played a crucial role in the Kargil War of 1999, showcasing their effectiveness in high-altitude combat. Over the years, France has consistently supported India during critical times, including when other countries imposed sanctions.

Key Defence Deals and Collaborations

One of the landmark agreements between the two nations was the **Rafale fighter jet deal** in 2016. India signed an intergovernmental agreement with France to purchase 36 Rafale jets worth around €7.87 billion. These jets enhanced the Indian Air Force's strike capabilities, providing advanced avionics, electronic warfare systems, and weaponry.

Another significant collaboration is the **Scorpene-class submarines deal** under Project-75, signed in 2005. Six submarines were built by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL) in collaboration with France's Naval Group. These diesel-electric attack submarines are equipped with advanced stealth features and long-range torpedoes.

In addition to aircraft and submarines, India and France regularly conduct joint military exercises, including the **Varuna naval exercise**, **Garuda air exercise**, and **Shakti army exercise**. These collaborations bolster interoperability between the armed forces of both nations.

India and France have maintained a strong strategic partnership over several decades, with defence cooperation being a key pillar. This relationship has deepened significantly in recent years, driven by shared interests in regional stability, maritime security, and counter-terrorism.

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**Rafale-M: The Naval Variant**

The **Rafale-M** is the naval version of the Dassault Rafale fighter jet, designed for carrier-based operations. It is currently deployed on the **French aircraft carrier Charles de Gaulle** and has proven to be a formidable platform for maritime strike roles. The "M" in Rafale-M stands for "**Marine**", indicating its specialization for naval operations.

Key Features of Rafale-M:

1. **Carrier Compatibility:**
 - Designed to take off and land from aircraft carriers using a **catapult launch and arrestor wire system**.
 - Reinforced undercarriage to withstand harsh carrier landings.
2. **Advanced Avionics and Combat Systems:**
 - Equipped with the **RBE2-AA AESA radar**, providing superior target detection and tracking.
 - Integrated with advanced **Spectra electronic warfare systems** and

Thales Front Sector Optronics (FSO).

3. **Weapons Capability:**

- Can carry a wide range of **air-to-air, air-to-ground, and anti-ship missiles**, including the **Exocet anti-ship missile**.
- Compatible with **nuclear and conventional payloads**.

4. **Versatile Combat Roles:**

- Capable of **air superiority, precision strike, reconnaissance, and nuclear deterrence**.
- Adapted for maritime strike and air defence operations.

Difference between Rafale and Rafale-M

Although both are part of the Rafale family, the **Rafale-M** is distinct from the **Rafale C (single-seat) and Rafale B (twin-seat)**, which are designed for the Air Force. Here are the primary differences:

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India to buy French Rafale fighter jets

India's defence ministry has announced that it will buy 126 French-made Rafale combat aircraft in a massive \$11 billion deal that will increase the might of the world's fourth largest air force

Dassault Rafale was lowest bidder in two-way competition with Eurofighter Typhoon. Both aircraft saw action during recent Libyan campaign

Engines: Twin SNECMA M88-2 turbofans, each rated at 75kN

Wing area: 46 sq m

Length: 15.3m

Wingspan: 10.8m

SPECIFICATIONS	
Type	Single / twin-seat multirole fighter
Entered service	December 2000
Max. take-off weight	24,500kg
Maximum speed	Mach 1.8 (1,910km/h)
Combat radius	1,850km
Armament: One 30mm cannon with 125 rounds, up to 9.5 tonnes of weapons on 14 hardpoints	

Typical air defence mission: 6 x Mica air-to-air missiles (AAMs)

Ground-attack: 3 x laser-guided bombs, 6 x Mica AAMs

Nuclear strike: Nuclear stand-off missile, 6 x Mica AAMs

Sources: Airforce-technology, wire agencies | Picture: Getty Images | © GRAPHIC NEWS

1. Carrier-Based Operation:

- Rafale-M is specifically designed for carrier operations with a strengthened airframe and undercarriage.
- It features an **arrestor hook** for landing on aircraft carriers and a **retractable front ladder**.
- In contrast, Rafale C and B operate from land-based airfields.

2. Weight and Structure:

- Rafale-M is **heavier** due to reinforced landing gear and structural strengthening.
- It also has a **longer nose wheel** for a higher angle of attack during takeoff.

3. Landing Gear and Tailhook:

- Rafale-M has a **single-wheel nose landing gear** suited for catapult launches.
- It includes a **tailhook** for arrested landings on aircraft carriers.

4. Fuel and Range:

- Both variants have similar **fuel capacity and range**, but the naval variant may carry more fuel for extended maritime missions.

Significance of the Rafale-M Deal for India

The Indian Navy currently operates two aircraft carriers — **INS Vikramaditya** (from Russia) and the **indigenously built INS Vikrant**. These carriers need advanced fighter jets to ensure dominance in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

THE MEGA DEAL

Worth Rs. 60,000 crore, (7.8 billion Euros), Rafale is one of the biggest defence deals India has ever signed

India and France are expected to sign the agreement for purchase of 36 Rafale fighters on Friday in presence of the Defence Ministers of both the countries

Key features are an Israeli helmet mounted display, air-to-air beyond visual range missiles, and other missile systems

Rafale is a strategic weapon in the hands of the IAF due to its beyond visual range Meteor air-to-air missile, with a range in excess of 150 km

KEY QUESTIONS

- A very expensive acquisition
- Will further add to the logistics challenge for the Air Force, which operates several kinds of Russian and NATO fighters
- Given the high cost, more Rafale fighters may not be acquired
- Air Force has a need for at least 42 fighter squadrons; it now has only 33

Average fighter would cost over Rs 1,600 crore, three times a Sukhoi-30 fighter

SERVICE SUPPORT

- France will carry out performance-based logistics support — at all times, at least 75 per cent fighters will be airworthy

75%

With Rafale's BVR air-to-air missile, IAF can hit targets inside Pakistan from India's territory

Rafale deal comes with a net saving of nearly 750 million Euros compared with the one struck during the previous government, which was scrapped by the NDA, besides a 50 per cent offset clause

The proposed deal for **26 Rafale-M jets** will address the shortage of carrier-based fighters, especially as the Navy seeks to replace its aging **MiG-29K** fleet. The Rafale-M will bridge the gap

PRAGNYA BHARATHI: Detailed News Analysis (DNA)

until India's indigenous **Twin Engine Deck-Based Fighter (TEDBF)** is developed and inducted.

Apart from operational readiness, this deal also enhances strategic ties between India and France, reaffirming France's commitment to India's maritime security interests. It also provides India with an edge in naval aviation, complementing its efforts to project power in the Indo-Pacific region.

India's strategic partnership with France has reached new heights with major defence deals like the Rafale and Scorpene acquisitions. The **Rafale-M deal** is particularly significant as it strengthens India's naval air power and reinforces the country's capability to secure the vast Indian Ocean Region. Through consistent collaboration and shared interests, India and France continue to bolster their defence and strategic relationship.

Prelims Practice Question

Q. Consider the following statements regarding the Rafale-M fighter jets and India-France defence relations:

1. Rafale-M is the naval variant of the Rafale fighter jet, specifically designed for carrier-based operations.
2. The Indian Navy has finalized the procurement of 26 Rafale-M jets as a part of the strategic partnership with France.
3. The Rafale-M variant is equipped with the Spectra electronic warfare system and the Exocet anti-ship missile.
4. France is one of the few countries that consistently supported India during

international sanctions and provided advanced military technology.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- A) 1 and 2 only
- B) 1, 3, and 4 only
- C) 2, 3, and 4 only
- D) 1, 2, 3, and 4

Answer:

B) 1, 3, and 4 only

Explanation:

1. **Statement 1 is correct:** Rafale-M is the naval variant designed for carrier-based operations with features like reinforced landing gear and arrestor hooks.
2. **Statement 2 is incorrect:** Although the deal for 26 Rafale-M jets is in advanced stages and awaiting approval from the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS), it has not been finalized yet.
3. **Statement 3 is correct:** Rafale-M is equipped with the **Spectra electronic warfare system** and can carry the **Exocet anti-ship missile**.
4. **Statement 4 is correct:** France has been a reliable defence partner for India, consistently providing advanced military technology even during international sanctions.

The correct answer is **B) 1, 3, and 4 only**.

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Mains Model Question

Q. India and France have emerged as strong strategic partners in the field of defence cooperation. Discuss the significance of the recent Rafale-M and Scorpene submarine deals in strengthening India's maritime security and naval capabilities.

India and France share a long-standing strategic partnership, with defence cooperation being a central pillar. In recent years, this relationship has deepened, driven by shared geopolitical interests and the need to bolster maritime security. One of the most significant developments in this partnership is the proposed acquisition of 26 Rafale-M fighter jets and three additional Scorpene-class submarines, collectively worth around \$11 billion. These deals represent a critical step towards modernizing India's naval capabilities and ensuring security in the Indian Ocean Region.



The Rafale-M fighter jets, specifically designed for carrier-based operations, will significantly enhance the Indian Navy's combat readiness. These jets are equipped with advanced avionics, electronic warfare systems, and the ability to carry a wide range of weapons, including the Exocet anti-ship missile. They will be deployed on India's aircraft carriers, INS Vikramaditya and INS Vikrant, thereby strengthening the Navy's ability to project air power at sea. As India seeks to counter increasing maritime challenges from rival powers, the Rafale-M will fill the gap created by the aging MiG-29K fleet and complement the indigenous Twin Engine Deck-Based Fighter once it is operational.

PRAGNYA BHARATHI: Detailed News Analysis (DNA)

The Scorpene-class submarines will add to India's underwater combat capabilities. These diesel-electric submarines are known for their stealth, endurance, and precision strike capabilities. With the Indian Ocean witnessing growing strategic competition, the addition of these submarines will significantly bolster India's anti-submarine warfare capacity and enhance deterrence.

The deals also signify a deeper strategic convergence between India and France, reflecting trust and long-term cooperation. France's willingness to transfer advanced technology and support indigenous production further strengthens India's defence self-reliance. As maritime security challenges escalate, these acquisitions mark a crucial step in securing India's interests and maintaining a credible naval presence in the region.

Topic : India-Myanmar Border

Relevance : GS Paper 2 Polity and International Relations

Source : Indian Express

Context :



India and Myanmar share a **1,643-km-long border**, which runs through four Indian states: **Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, and Mizoram**. This border is not just a geographical demarcation but a complex socio-cultural and strategic frontier. The terrain is rugged, comprising dense forests, hills, and river valleys, making surveillance and management a challenging task.

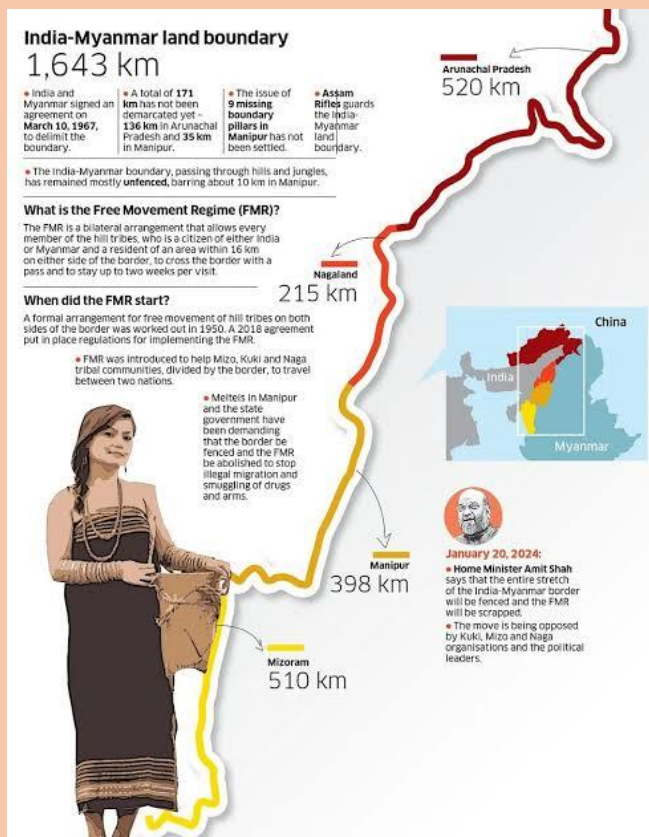
The **India-Myanmar border holds immense geopolitical importance** as it serves as India's gateway to Southeast Asia, playing a pivotal role in the **Act East Policy**. It also acts as a strategic buffer against China's influence in the region. Furthermore, the proximity to the **Bay of Bengal** and vital sea routes adds to its significance.

Border Issues between India and Myanmar

One of the major challenges associated with the India-Myanmar border is its **porosity**, allowing easy cross-border movement of people and goods.

PRAGNYA BHARATHI: Detailed News Analysis (DNA)

Historically, there has been **unregulated movement** along the border due to ethnic and familial ties, which are facilitated by the **Free Movement Regime (FMR)**. This regime allows residents from both sides to travel up to **16 km across the border without a visa**, primarily to meet family and participate in traditional activities.



- **Drug Trafficking:** The **Golden Triangle** (comprising Myanmar, Laos, and Thailand) is a global hub for narcotics production, especially opium and methamphetamine. Drugs smuggled from Myanmar pose a major threat to the social fabric of India's Northeastern states.
- **Illegal Immigration:** Unregulated cross-border movement has led to illegal immigration, causing demographic changes and social tension, particularly in states like Manipur and Mizoram.
- **Smuggling and Arms Trafficking:** The border is often used for the smuggling of arms, contraband, and other illegal goods, adversely affecting internal security.

Issues with Refugees

India has faced a significant influx of refugees from Myanmar, especially after the **military coup in February 2021**. Thousands of refugees, primarily from the **Chin and Kuki-Zo communities**, fled to Mizoram and Manipur, seeking asylum from military crackdowns.

The primary challenges with refugee management include:

However, this openness has also resulted in numerous security challenges:

- **Insurgent Activities:** Several insurgent groups from India's Northeast find safe havens in Myanmar. These groups exploit the lack of fencing and dense forest cover to cross the border undetected.

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Myanmar coup

Seizure of power on February 1 follows weeks of tensions and the military's allegations of "huge irregularities" in November parliamentary polls



What we know so far:

- ▶ The army has declared a one-year state of emergency
- ▶ Myint Swe, a former general and the current vice president, to become acting president
- ▶ As well as Suu Kyi, President Win Myint and other civilian leaders taken into custody hours before parliament due to reconvene after elections
- ▶ Internet and mobile phone communications severely restricted across the country
- ▶ Army pledges it will hold fresh elections
- ▶ All banks closed nationwide



- 2010 Released from house arrest after 15 year detention by the junta
- 2016 Assumes de facto national leadership in the role of state councillor
- 2015 Leads NLD* to landslide election victory in the country's first democratic elections
- 2020 Leads NLD to second landslide victory
- Feb 1, 2021 Arrested hours before new parliament due to convene

*National League for Democracy AFP

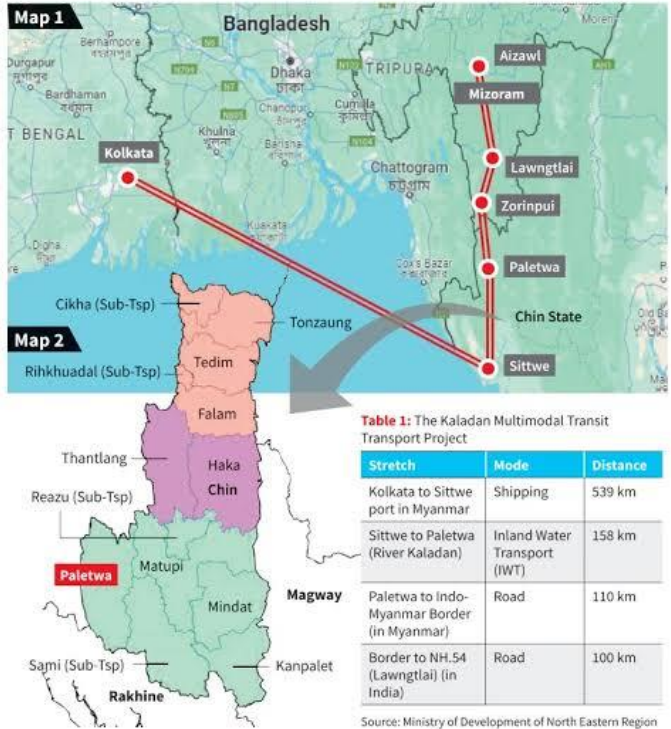
- **Humanitarian Concerns:** Providing shelter, food, and basic amenities to refugees has been a logistical challenge.
- **Security Concerns:** Infiltration by anti-India insurgent groups under the guise of refugees poses a threat to national security.
- **Ethnic Tensions:** The inflow of refugees has at times caused friction with local communities, as well as among various tribal groups sharing cross-border ethnic ties.
- **Legal Ambiguity:** India is not a signatory to the 1951 UN Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol, which complicates the formal recognition and rights of refugees.

Initiatives Taken by the Indian Government

To address security and cross-border challenges, the Indian government has initiated several measures:

Myanmar's border State and India's strategic interests

Map 1 shows the route of India's proposed Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport Project, with Map 2 showing Chin State where current tensions are playing out. Chin State abuts Mizoram and Manipur in India. Table 1 outlines details of the Kaladan project



1. Fencing the Entire Border:

- In February 2024, Union Home Minister Amit Shah announced plans to fence the entire Indo-Myanmar border with an "anti-cut, anti-climb" fence within 10 years.
- The fence aims to curb illegal infiltration, smuggling, and insurgency by making the border impenetrable.
- The project also includes the construction of 64 border roads to improve connectivity to Company Operating Bases (COBs) of the

PRAGNYA BHARATHI: Detailed News Analysis (DNA)

Assam Rifles, the primary force guarding the Myanmar border.

2. Infrastructural Development:

- The **Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS)** approved the project with a budget of **₹31,031.9 crore**, including maintenance costs for five years.
- Construction includes **1,610 km of fencing and 1,467 km of roads**, which will facilitate better troop movement and logistics.

3. Strengthening Assam Rifles Presence:

- Setting up more **Company Operating Bases (COBs)** and equipping them with advanced surveillance and monitoring technology.

4. Diplomatic Measures:

- Enhanced cooperation with Myanmar to conduct **joint operations** against insurgent groups.
- Regular dialogue between the **Indian Army and Myanmar's Tatmadaw (Military)** to maintain peace and security.

One of the contentious areas is **Moreh-Tamu**, where the **Naga and Kuki-Zo communities** have raised objections to fencing, citing disruptions to familial ties and ethnic unity. Despite the government's efforts to negotiate with local stakeholders, opposition continues from these communities.

Prelims Practice Question

Q. With reference to the India-Myanmar border, consider the following statements:

1. India and Myanmar share a border of approximately 1,643 km that runs through four Indian states.
2. The Free Movement Regime (FMR) between India and Myanmar allows residents on both sides to travel up to 16 km without a visa.
3. The Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) approved a fencing project along the entire India-Myanmar border, which is expected to be completed within five years.
4. The Assam Rifles is the primary force responsible for guarding the India-Myanmar border.

Land Boundary Agreements and Past Initiatives

Unlike the **Indo-Bangladesh Land Boundary Agreement of 2015**, there has been no formal **land boundary settlement** between India and Myanmar. Historically, the **Boundary Agreement of 1967** delineated the boundary, but there have been persistent disputes over specific sectors, especially in areas with mixed ethnic populations.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- A) 1, 2, and 4 only
- B) 1 and 4 only
- C) 2 and 3 only
- D) 1, 2, 3, and 4

Answer:

B) 1 and 4 only

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Explanation:

- Statement 1 is correct:** India and Myanmar share a **1,643-km-long border**, running through **Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, and Mizoram**.
- Statement 2 is incorrect:** The Free Movement Regime (FMR) allows **movement up to 16 km on both sides** without a visa, but the correct distance specified in most official agreements is **10 km**.
- Statement 3 is incorrect:** The fencing project along the India-Myanmar border is expected to be completed within **10 years**, not five years.
- Statement 4 is correct:** The **Assam Rifles** is responsible for guarding the India-Myanmar border.







The correct answer is **B) 1 and 4 only**.

Mains Model Question

Q. India-Myanmar border management poses significant security and socio-cultural challenges. Discuss the recent initiatives taken by the Indian government to address these challenges and analyze their potential impact on border security and local communities.

The India-Myanmar border, stretching over 1,643 km, presents complex challenges due to its rugged terrain, dense forests, and socio-cultural linkages. The Free Movement Regime (FMR) allows people living within 10 km on either side to cross the border without a visa, fostering ethnic and familial

ties. However, this open movement has also led to security challenges such as insurgency, arms smuggling, drug trafficking, and illegal immigration.

ANCIENT TIMES	BRITISH TIMES	1951	1962	2015	2021
Buddhism spread to Myanmar from India.	British administered Burma as province of India till 1937	India and Burma established diplomatic relations	Military took over control in Myanmar in a coup	Suu Kyi's NLD wins and forms government	Landslide victory of NLD and Army took over power in coup.
					

To address these issues, the Indian government has initiated a comprehensive border management strategy. In February 2024, Union Home Minister Amit Shah announced a project to fence the entire India-Myanmar border with an "anti-cut, anti-climb" fence within 10 years. The project, costing approximately ₹31,000 crore, has received approval from the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS). It also includes constructing 64 roads to improve connectivity to Company Operating Bases (COBs) of the Assam Rifles, which is responsible for border security. The fencing is designed to prevent illegal infiltration, smuggling, and insurgent movements.

This initiative is expected to significantly enhance India's internal security by curbing cross-border terrorism and illicit trade. However, it also raises concerns among local ethnic communities, particularly the Nagas and Kuki-Zo groups, who fear that the fence will disrupt familial and cultural ties. Despite opposition, the government maintains that the fencing is crucial for maintaining law and order, especially in violence-prone areas like Manipur.

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The impact of this initiative will depend on balancing security needs with cultural sensitivities. To address local grievances, it is essential to involve community leaders in planning and decision-making. Effective communication and providing alternative cross-border engagement mechanisms can help mitigate social tensions while ensuring robust border management. In the long run, successful implementation will secure India's northeastern frontiers and strengthen national security.

Topic : Melioidosis

Relevance : GS Paper 3 General Science, Diseases

Source : The Hindu

Context :

Environmental mapping reveals melioidosis peak during monsoon

A study has revealed that melioidosis disease in Odisha has clear seasonality, with infections peaking during and after the monsoon season. Disease occurrence is also linked to temperature, cloud cover and solar radiation

B. Behera
T.S. Sarin
V. Vinoj

Globally, research on climate-environmentally driven infectious diseases has been largely biased towards vector-borne diseases like malaria, dengue, etc. Melioidosis is a bacterial infectious disease caused by *Burkholderia pseudomallei*, and is primarily acquired by inhalation, ingestion of soil- and water-dwelling environmental saprophytes. The disease is strongly influenced by environmental factors such as rainfall, temperature, and humidity. In 2006, *The Lancet*, based on a prediction modelling study, reported that about 1.65,000 people contract melioidosis annually worldwide, of which South Asia, including India, contributes to 44% of the global burden of melioidosis. The report attracted enormous scrutiny and attention by the medical fraternity, and microbiologists and clinicians in a few selected centres across India took cognisance of the situation to further unravel the mysterious disease.

There are many reasons why the melioidosis-causing bacteria, described over a hundred years ago, has continued to baffle the medical fraternity. First, the bacteria have a unique ability to cause a plethora of clinical manifestations ranging from a trivial skin infection to unresolved pneumonia and fulminant sepsis. With fatality as high as 50% in septicemic cases, melioidosis is a medical conundrum. A second

reason is that the bacterium requires prolonged incubation conditions, and can escape detection in inexperienced microbiology laboratories, as chances of misidentification with common bacteria like *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* are quite common. Third, the treatment of melioidosis is quite different from other infectious diseases as it requires an initial intravenous therapy followed by a prolonged eradication phase of 12-20 weeks. This puts a significant emphasis on correct diagnosis, as inadequate treatment runs a risk of recurrence.

In India, melioidosis research has mainly focused on understanding the disease from the host perspective, like presence of comorbidities like diabetes, chronic renal diseases, etc and occupational factors like farming and behavioural factors like alcoholism, which increases the likelihood of diseases. In Odisha, melioidosis cases are being reported at AIIMS Bhubaneswar, with

Survival of melioidosis-causing bacteria

Environmental conditions are primarily responsible for the survival of the bacteria

- As per a 2016 study, 1.65,000 people contract melioidosis annually worldwide. South Asian countries contribute 44% of the global burden

- The bacteria can cause a range of clinical manifestations – trivalent infection to unresolved pneumonia and fulminant sepsis

- The bacteria that causes melioidosis requires prolonged incubation conditions, and hence may escape detection

- The study focused on 144 disease cases over a nine-year period from 2015 to 2023

- The disease peaked during and after the monsoon season

- Environmental mapping indicated that Cuttack, Balasore, Khordha, and Jagpur districts have a high potential for disease occurrence

- As climate change alters rainfall patterns, the diseases can become more widespread and/or shift to new regions



cases increasing over the years. Odisha with vast agricultural areas and extreme weather events present ample opportunities for human exposure to the bacteria. Environmental conditions are primarily responsible for the survival of the melioidosis-causing bacteria, thus making a strong case for investigation. With this in mind, microbiologists at AIIMS Bhubaneswar and climate scientists at IIT Bhubaneswar have collaborated to identify the conditions that may facilitate the occurrence of melioidosis in Odisha. To investigate this, the team tracked each reported disease case, correlating it with the patient's home location and possible incubation periods to identify the most common environmental conditions that may have facilitated disease transmission. The study focused on 144 disease cases over a nine-year period from 2015 to 2023. The team analysed meteorological parameters, in-

cluding rainfall, temperature, humidity, and solar radiation, across more than 3,024 days during this period to identify the most favourable conditions for bacterial survival and, consequently, transmission. Using this information, the team created a map identifying potential regions for disease occurrence, using 10 km grid sizes to cover the entire State of Odisha.

"Clear seasonality"

The analysis, which was recently published in the journal *Current Research in Microbial Sciences*, revealed that the disease exhibited a clear seasonality, with infections peaking during and after the monsoon season. Disease occurrence also exhibited relationships with temperature, rainfall, cloud cover and solar radiation. The mapping indicated that districts such as Cuttack, Balasore, Khordha, and Jagpur have a high potential for disease occurrence. Interestingly, these areas also coincide with some of the most densely

populated regions in the State. Other elements, such as land use changes, soil composition, are likely to influence disease dynamics. Due to data limitations, the team was unable to include these factors in the study. Rapid urbanisation, poor sanitation, may further heighten risk by increasing human exposure to contaminated environments. Additionally, as climate change alters rainfall patterns and intensifies extreme weather events, these diseases could become more widespread and/or shift to new regions. Therefore, public health systems must adapt by incorporating climate analytics into their disease surveillance and prediction efforts.

This study also highlights the potential of climate-driven disease modeling beyond melioidosis, especially for diseases influenced by environmental factors. Incorporating weather and climate data into public health planning could improve outbreak predictions, enhance preparedness, and reduce health risks.

Odisha's experience could provide a valuable model for other regions, highlighting the importance of combining climate science with medical research to address emerging health risks.

Dr. Behera is Professor, Department of Microbiology, AIIMS Bhubaneswar; T.S. Sarin is PhD scholar at the School of Earth Ocean and Climate Sciences, IIT Bhubaneswar; and V. Vinoj is Associate Professor, School of Earth Ocean and Climate Sciences, IIT Bhubaneswar

Melioidosis is an infectious disease caused by the bacterium *Burkholderia pseudomallei*.

The bacterium is primarily found in soil and water, especially in tropical and subtropical regions.

It enters the human body through inhalation, ingestion, or inoculation via cuts and wounds.

The disease can present a wide spectrum of symptoms, ranging from mild skin infections to severe pneumonia, septicemia, and even death.

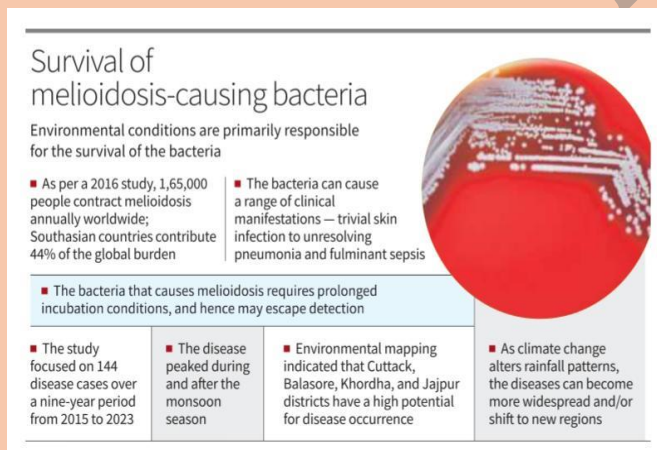
Fatality rates can reach up to 50% in cases of septicemia, making melioidosis a critical public health concern.

PRAGNYA BHARATHI: Detailed News Analysis (DNA)

Geographical Spread and Affected States in India:

- Melioidosis is prevalent in tropical regions globally, with South Asia contributing around 44% of the global disease burden.
- In India, cases have been reported mainly from the southern and eastern states:
 - Odisha:** Emerging as a significant hotspot, with increasing cases reported at AIIMS Bhubaneswar.
 - Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala:** Other states with documented cases.
- In Odisha, the disease is most prevalent in districts like Cuttack, Balasore, Khordha, and Jajpur.
- These districts are characterized by vast agricultural activities, dense populations, and climatic conditions favorable for bacterial survival.

Environmental and Climatic Factors:



- The disease shows clear seasonality, peaking during and after the monsoon season.

- Key environmental factors influencing melioidosis include:
 - Rainfall and Humidity:** Enhance bacterial survival and spread.
 - Temperature and Solar Radiation:** Affect bacterial growth and activity.
 - Cloud Cover:** Creates conducive conditions for bacterial persistence.
- The study conducted by AIIMS Bhubaneswar and IIT Bhubaneswar analyzed data over nine years (2015–2023) and found correlations between these factors and disease occurrence.

Major Concerns and Challenges:

- Diagnostic Complexity:**
 - The bacterium requires prolonged incubation and may be misidentified as *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*.
 - Misdiagnosis often leads to improper treatment, increasing the risk of recurrence.
- Treatment Challenges:**
 - Initial intravenous therapy followed by prolonged eradication therapy (12–20 weeks).
 - Inadequate treatment may result in recurrence and increased mortality.
- Socio-environmental Challenges:**

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- Rapid urbanization and poor sanitation increase exposure to contaminated environments.
- Climate change, with intensified monsoons and erratic rainfall patterns, could expand the geographical range of the disease.

Measures and Recommendations:

- **Integrated Surveillance:**
 - Combine climate data with disease surveillance to map high-risk zones.
 - Odisha's approach to mapping potential regions using environmental factors can be replicated nationwide.
- **Public Health Interventions:**
 - Improve diagnostic capabilities and train healthcare professionals to accurately identify and treat melioidosis.

- Increase public awareness about preventive measures and symptoms.
- **Policy Measures:**
 - Adapt public health planning to incorporate climate analytics for better prediction and preparedness.

Melioidosis poses a significant threat to public health, especially in regions prone to climatic variations and extreme weather events. Odisha's integrated approach to blending climate science with medical research serves as a model for other states. Strengthening diagnostic capabilities, increasing public awareness, and adopting climate-responsive public health strategies are crucial to effectively managing and mitigating the disease's impact.

Prelims Practice Question:

Q. With reference to Melioidosis, consider the following statements:

1. Melioidosis is an infectious disease caused by a virus commonly found in tropical and subtropical regions.
2. The disease primarily spreads through inhalation, ingestion, or contact with contaminated soil and water.
3. Melioidosis is known to peak during and after the monsoon season, especially in states like Odisha.
4. The bacterium causing Melioidosis is easily detectable and requires only a short incubation period.

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Which of the statements given above are correct?

- (a) 1 and 3 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1, 2, and 4 only
- (d) 2, 3, and 4 only

Answer:

(b) 2 and 3 only

Explanation:

1. **Statement 1 is incorrect:** Melioidosis is caused by a bacterium called *Burkholderia pseudomallei*, not a virus.
2. **Statement 2 is correct:** The disease primarily spreads through inhalation, ingestion, or direct contact with contaminated soil and water.
3. **Statement 3 is correct:** The disease shows a clear seasonal pattern, peaking during and after the monsoon season, particularly in Odisha.
4. **Statement 4 is incorrect:** The bacterium requires prolonged incubation and is often difficult to detect, as it can be misidentified as *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*.

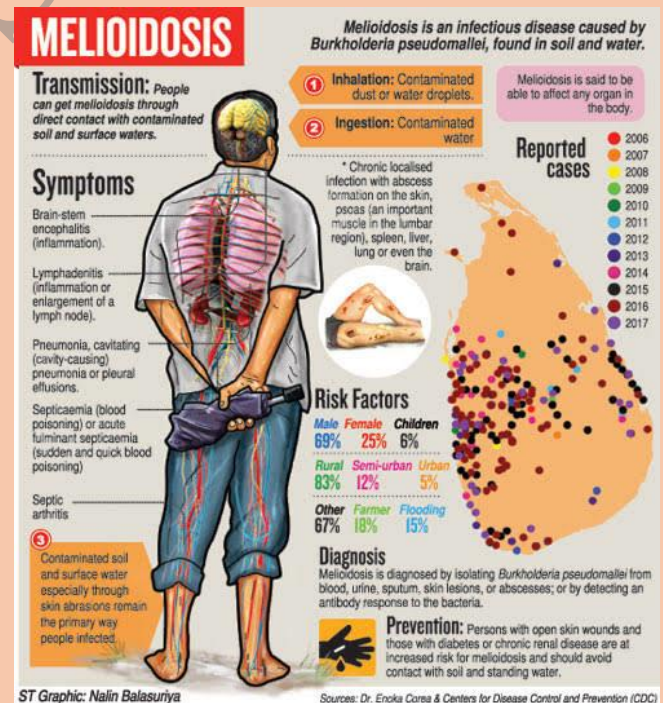
Hence, the correct answer is (b) 2 and 3 only.

Mains Model Question:

Q. Melioidosis, an emerging infectious disease in India, poses significant public health challenges due to its environmental linkage and diagnostic complexities. Discuss the factors contributing to its spread, the challenges in its diagnosis and

treatment, and suggest measures to mitigate its impact.

Melioidosis is an infectious disease caused by the bacterium *Burkholderia pseudomallei*, commonly found in soil and water in tropical and subtropical regions. In India, the disease is gaining attention due to increasing cases, particularly in Odisha, where climatic and environmental conditions favor bacterial survival. Factors contributing to its spread include high rainfall, humidity, temperature variations, and cloud cover, which create ideal conditions for bacterial proliferation. Agricultural practices and human activities that increase soil and water contact further heighten the risk. The disease peaks during and after the monsoon season, coinciding with increased human exposure.



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One of the major challenges in addressing melioidosis is its diagnostic complexity. The bacterium requires prolonged incubation, and inexperienced laboratories often misidentify it as *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, leading to incorrect diagnosis and treatment. Additionally, melioidosis exhibits a wide range of clinical manifestations, from mild skin infections to severe pneumonia and septicemia, making diagnosis even more challenging. The treatment protocol is rigorous, involving initial intravenous therapy followed by prolonged oral eradication therapy lasting up to 20 weeks. Failure to complete the treatment regimen increases the risk of recurrence and mortality, especially in cases of septicemia.

To mitigate the impact of melioidosis, it is essential to improve diagnostic capabilities by training healthcare professionals and upgrading laboratory facilities. Public awareness campaigns must educate at-risk populations about preventive measures, especially in areas prone to contamination. Incorporating climate analytics into public health planning can help predict outbreaks and enhance preparedness. Odisha's model of combining climate and medical research to identify hotspots should be replicated in other vulnerable regions. Addressing socio-environmental factors such as poor sanitation and unplanned urbanization is also crucial. By adopting a multi-pronged strategy, the public health system can effectively manage and reduce the burden of melioidosis in India.

Topic : Madhav National Park

Relevance : GS Paper 3 Environmental Science

Source : The Hindu

Context :



India, home to the largest population of wild tigers in the world, has been at the forefront of tiger conservation efforts. On March 9, 2024, the Government of India declared **Madhav National Park** in Madhya Pradesh as the country's **58th tiger reserve**. This declaration was made by Environment Minister **Bhupender Yadav**, marking an important milestone in India's wildlife conservation journey. Madhya Pradesh now holds the distinction of having the **highest number of tiger reserves** in the country, with nine in total. This achievement reflects the state's commitment to conserving its wildlife and habitats, which include prominent reserves such as **Kanha, Panna, Bandhavgarh, and Pench**. The addition of Madhav National Park further consolidates the state's status as the "**Tiger State**" of India.

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Historical Context

- Tigers were historically abundant in India, with an estimated **40,000 individuals** at the turn of the 20th century.
- However, factors such as **hunting, poaching, habitat destruction, and deforestation** led to a sharp decline in their numbers.
- By the 1960s, the tiger population had plummeted to around **2,000-4,000**.
- Post-independence, rampant hunting and clearing of forests for agriculture and infrastructure further threatened the species.
- The establishment of "**Shikar Companies**" and the fur trade also contributed significantly to the rapid decline.

Launch of Project Tiger

Why has India got another tiger reserve?

Where is Madhav National Park located? What is its tiger population? What are the factors under consideration before a national park can become a designated tiger reserve? What is the tiger population in the country according to the 2023 tiger census?

Jacob Koshy

The story so far:
On March 9, Environment Minister Bhupendra Patel announced that the Centre had declared the Madhav National Park in Madhya Pradesh as the country's 58th tiger reserve. This is the ninth tiger reserve in the State, the highest among the States. Maharashtra has six, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka have five each.

What is the rationale behind setting up tiger reserves?

While tigers were historically abundant in India, hunting, poaching and the colonial exploitation of forests for timber started a precipitous decline in their numbers in the early 20th century. It was estimated in 1964 that there would have been around 40,000 tigers in the country at the start of the 20th century. By the 1960s, these numbers were down to between 2,000 and 4,000, attributed to wasteful hunting aided by a proliferation of gun licences issued in the years following 1947, improved access to the forest, clearing of large tracts of forests for various purposes, mushrooming of the new businesses of "shikar Companies" and fur trade.

Following an alarm raised by naturalists, the Indian Board for Wild Life (IBWL) – the earlier name of the National Board for Wildlife – in a meeting in New Delhi in July, 1969 recommended a total ban on the export of all

The Madhav National Park is an important connecting corridor to Ranthambore tiger reserve in Rajasthan

wild cat skins, including tigers. The same year, the 10th Assembly of International Union for Conservation of Nature met in Delhi and included the tiger in its "Red Data Book" as an endangered species and adopted a resolution calling for a ban on the killing of tigers. When Prime Minister Indira Gandhi commissioned an 11 member Task Force to investigate the problem and prepare a project to preserve the tiger in the wild in India. In August 1972, the Task Force recommended eight tiger forests spread across India to be brought under the purview of 'Project Tiger'. As this mission came to be called. On April 1, 1973, Project Tiger was inaugurated at Corbett tiger reserve with nine tiger reserves announced across India – Corbett (then in Uttar Pradesh, now in Uttarakhand), Palamu (then in Bihar, now in Jharkhand), Sanjhal (Odisha), Sundarbans (West Bengal), Manas (Assam), Ranthambore (Rajasthan), Kanha (Madhya Pradesh), Melghat (Maharashtra) and Bandipur (Karnataka) – which were representative of the various tiger habitats in the country.

What does establishing a tiger reserve entail?
The Project Tiger (replaced by the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) since 2006) guidelines made it mandatory for every tiger reserve to be managed in accordance with a site-specific management plan. Project Tiger established a template for scientific management of protected areas in India. It laid down the concept of establishing a 'core zone' and a 'buffer zone', prescribed interventions for protection, habitat improvement, field data collection relating to change in the composition of flora and fauna on account of protection, animal estimation and other aspects. The guidelines also established Tiger Conservation Plans for protection and site specific habitat management for viable population of tigers, prey and co-predators, (i) ecologically important uses in the tiger reserves and areas linking one protected area or tiger reserve to another for addressing the livelihood concerns of local people. The NTCA guidelines for preparing Tiger Conservation Plans. A number of constraints imposed by small reserves embedded in human land uses, aimed to create source populations within tiger reserves with corridor links between sources and to sink habitats. Sources are places where animal numbers are growing, and sinks are where they are dwindling, and must be supplemented by bringing in animals to boost numbers to sustainable numbers. To establish a reserve, the Centre gets a proposal from the State, the NTCA recommends the proposal to

the State after due diligence, the State government notifies the area as a Tiger Reserve.

How are tiger reserves funded?
Under Project Tiger guidelines, 40% of the funds for conservation are provided by the Centre, while the rest is borne by the concerned State. In the case of Northeastern and Himalayan States, the Centre covers 90% of the funds. These activities include anti-poaching initiatives, habitat improvement and water development, addressing human-animal conflicts, designating inside areas, and relocating villages from critical tiger habitats within a timeframe by offering a better relocation package. It also supports States in settling the rights of displaced people, rehabilitating traditional hunting tribes living in and around tiger reserves, conducting independent monitoring, and evaluating tiger reserves.

Why is the Madhav National Park important?
With an estimated area of 165.32 sq km, it was first notified as a National Park in Madhya Pradesh in 1956 under the SP National Parks Act, 1956. Now, the Madhav National Park and tiger reserve has a core area of 355 sq km, with a buffer zone of 4.6 sq km. It did not have a tiger population till 2023, when a male tiger and two females were relocated there. Today, the population has grown to seven. However, the Madhav reserve is an important connecting corridor to the Ranthambore Tiger Reserve in Rajasthan. It is also connected to Kanha National Park, which now has a captive cheetah population. Experts speculate that there could be competition among these predators for the prey base of deer, leading to its complex dynamics.

Madhya Pradesh boasts several prominent tiger reserves, such as Kanha, Panna, and Bandhavgarh. Due to successful conservation strategies, the State has the highest number of tigers (785). However, the Kanha-Madhav forest division, in the northern part of the State, has historically been relatively neglected. With Kanha gaining prominence as an emerging cheetah reserve, a more centralised management strategy is expected to reverse both cheetah and tiger populations, contributing to the region's long term development as a wildlife spot. There are plans to introduce lions from Gir in Gujarat into Kanha National Park, after the Supreme Court green light the project. In March 2023, the government told the Supreme Court that relocating lions to Kanha may create tensions between the pride and the cheetahs imported from Namibia and South Africa, and sought time to re-examine the issue. But if lions were to be relocated to Kanha, it would also mean more funds – central and international – for conservation. As of the 2023 tiger census, India is estimated to have 3,682 tigers. About 30% of them are considered to be living outside tiger reserves.

Homes for the big cat

As of the 2023 tiger census, India is estimated to have 3,682 tigers. About 30% of them are considered to be living outside tiger reserves.



- In response to the crisis, **Project Tiger** was launched in **1973** under the leadership of **Prime Minister Indira Gandhi**.
- The project's primary objective was to create **scientifically managed protected areas** to conserve the remaining tiger population.
- Initially, **nine tiger reserves** were established, covering diverse habitats across the country.
- The **National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA)**, established in **2006**, now oversees the project, implementing modern conservation practices.

Process of Establishing a Tiger Reserve

- State Government Proposal:**
 - The state submits a proposal to the NTCA, identifying the area and justifying its potential as a tiger reserve.
- NTCA Recommendation:**
 - The NTCA evaluates the proposal based on **scientific, ecological, and social factors**.
 - After thorough scrutiny, the NTCA recommends the proposal to the State Government.
- State Government Notification:**
 - Upon approval, the State Government notifies the designated area as a **Tiger Reserve**.

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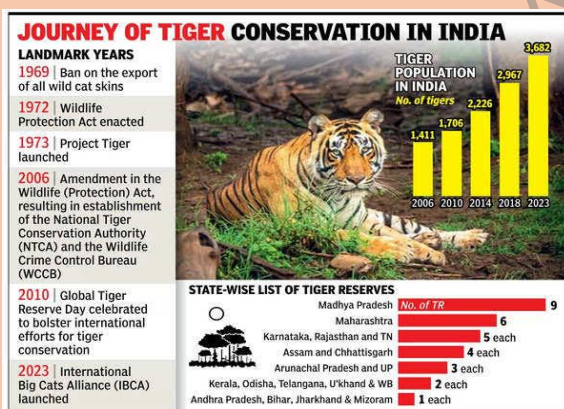
Zoning of Tiger Reserves

Core Zone

- This zone is strictly protected and free from any human interference.
- It serves as the **primary habitat for tigers and their prey**, ensuring a safe breeding ground.

Buffer Zone

- Surrounds the core zone and allows **regulated human activity**.
- Activities such as **ecotourism, sustainable agriculture, and community involvement** are promoted.
- It acts as a **transition area** between the highly protected core and human settlements.



Funding Mechanism

- Under **Project Tiger guidelines**, the funding pattern is as follows:
 - **60% from the Central Government**
 - **40% from the State Government**

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- For **Northeastern and Himalayan states**, the Centre bears **90%** of the expenses.

Conservation Activities

1. **Anti-Poaching Measures:**
 - Employing **forest guards, monitoring systems, and technology-based surveillance**.
2. **Habitat Improvement:**
 - Includes **afforestation, water resource management, and grassland rejuvenation**.
3. **Human-Wildlife Conflict Mitigation:**
 - Compensation schemes and awareness programs to reduce conflicts.
4. **Relocation and Rehabilitation:**
 - Villages located within critical habitats are relocated with **adequate compensation and rehabilitation packages**.
 - This helps maintain the **inviolability of core areas**.
5. **Community Involvement:**
 - Local communities are engaged in **conservation and tourism activities**, promoting livelihood opportunities while reducing poaching risks.

Significance of Madhav National Park

- Madhav National Park is located in **Shivpuri district, Madhya Pradesh**, and was first notified as a national park in **1956**.

<https://pragnyaiascoachinghyderabad.com/>

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Socio-Economic Significance

- Tiger reserves boost **ecotourism**, which creates jobs and income for local communities.
- They also foster a sense of **pride and ownership among local populations**.

Challenges and the Way Forward

- Increasing **human-wildlife conflict**, especially with communities residing near buffer zones.
- Addressing the **issue of poaching and illegal trade** requires continuous vigilance and community engagement.
- Maintaining **genetic diversity** among tiger populations by ensuring **corridor connectivity** is crucial.
- Enhanced funding and scientific management are needed to sustain conservation efforts.

India, with **3,682 tigers as of the 2023 census**, holds approximately **70% of the world's wild tiger population**. Tiger reserves like **Madhav National Park** play a crucial role in ensuring the survival and growth of this iconic species. By focusing on **habitat conservation, corridor connectivity, and community involvement**, India aims to secure a future where **tigers continue to thrive** in their natural habitats.

Prelims Practice Question:

With reference to Tiger Reserves in India, consider the following statements:

1. Madhav National Park in Madhya Pradesh is the latest declared Tiger Reserve in India.
2. Madhya Pradesh has the highest number of Tiger Reserves among all states in India.
3. The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) provides 90% of funding for tiger reserves in all states.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- A) 1 and 2 only
- B) 2 and 3 only
- C) 1 and 3 only
- D) 1, 2, and 3

Answer: A) 1 and 2 only

Explanation:

1. The Madhav National Park in Madhya Pradesh was declared the 58th Tiger Reserve of India in March 2024, making it the latest addition. Hence, statement 1 is correct.
2. Madhya Pradesh has the highest number of Tiger Reserves among all Indian states, with a total of nine reserves. Hence, statement 2 is correct.
3. The NTCA provides 60% of funding for tiger reserves in general states and 90% for Northeastern and Himalayan states. Hence, statement 3 is incorrect.

Mains Model Question:

The establishment of new tiger reserves in India, like the recent declaration of Madhav National Park as a tiger reserve, reflects the country's commitment to wildlife conservation. Discuss the relevance of tiger reserves in India's biodiversity conservation

PRAGNYA BHARATHI: Detailed News Analysis (DNA)

strategy and the challenges associated with their management.

Tiger reserves play a crucial role in India's biodiversity conservation strategy as they provide a protected habitat for tigers and a wide range of co-predators and prey species. Tigers are an apex predator and a keystone species, and their conservation ensures the stability of entire ecosystems. The declaration of Madhav National Park as India's 58th tiger reserve highlights the growing efforts to expand protected areas and secure tiger populations. Madhya Pradesh, with the highest number of tiger reserves in the country, demonstrates how state-level initiatives significantly contribute to wildlife preservation.

WHY IN NEWS ?

India has added the 58th tiger reserve to its tally with the latest entrant being Madhav National Park in Madhya Pradesh.

About Madhav National Park

- Madhav National Park is located in Shivpuri district of Madhya Pradesh, India. It got the status of a National Park in 1958.
- Once, Madhav National Park served as the hunting ground for Mughal emperors, Maharajas of Gwalior, and later for the British.
- The region's rich wildlife and diverse habitats attracted the attention of these rulers, who engaged in hunting expeditions in the area.



Project Tiger, launched in 1973 and now managed by the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), laid the foundation for structured conservation. Tiger reserves not only aim to increase tiger numbers but also focus on habitat restoration and mitigating human-wildlife conflict.

The core-buffer strategy within reserves allows for stricter protection in core areas while promoting sustainable use in buffer zones. This approach helps in maintaining a balance between conservation and the livelihoods of local communities.

However, managing tiger reserves poses challenges. Human-animal conflict remains a pressing issue as tigers often venture into human settlements. Additionally, habitat fragmentation and corridor disruption hinder tiger movement between reserves, leading to isolated populations and genetic bottlenecks. There is also the challenge of poaching and illegal wildlife trade, which threaten tiger survival despite increased vigilance. Furthermore, the relocation of communities from core areas, although necessary for wildlife conservation, often leads to social and economic challenges for displaced people.

To strengthen conservation efforts, it is crucial to enhance community participation, improve connectivity between tiger habitats, and implement more rigorous anti-poaching measures. Integrating scientific research with conservation policies and ensuring sustained funding will further contribute to the long-term success of tiger reserves in India.

Topic : Raisina Dialogue

Relevance : GS Paper 2 International Relations

Source : Indian Express

Context :

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What's on the agenda of the Raisina Dialogue?

Who are the newsmakers attending the 10th edition this year? Will Ukraine war, tariffs threatened by U.S. President Donald Trump, relations with China dominate proceedings? Why are leaders from West Asia and South East Asia not well represented? What about Pakistan?

Sahasini Halder

The story so far: A month after this year's explosive Munich Security Conference, where U.S. Vice President JD Vance put Europe on notice, Delhi is set to host the annual Raisina Dialogue from March 17-19, where U.S. President Donald Trump's seismic foreign policy shifts are expected to be the big conversation points again.

What are the issues expected to make the headlines? The 10th edition of the annual Raisina Dialogue will be inaugurated on Monday by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, where the chief guest, New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon will deliver the keynote address, with the theme "Kaleidoscope" (of global times). However, a big contingent from the U.S. is expected to take the centre stage, given the twists and turns in American policy under Mr. Trump – from the Ukraine war, the talks with Russia, the new tariff regime that threatens ties between the U.S. and countries around the world, including India, the U.S. fraying relations with its NATO and European allies, uncertainty around the U.S.'s Indo-Pacific policy, and new statements on China and Taiwan.

Amidst the turmoil, U.S. Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard is leading a team to



Absent speaker Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, who used to be a regular speaker, will not attend this year's Raisina Dialogue.

Delhi for an intelligence chiefs' conference at the weekend hosted by National Security Adviser Ajit Doval, and will speak at the Raisina Dialogue. Apart from Mr. Gabbard, the Special Assistant to U.S. President Trump and National Security Council official, Becky Gill, and Senior Counselor to Mr. Trump, James Carafano, who was a key figure behind the Republican campaign document "Project 2025", are also listed as speakers and are expected to defend the U.S. moves.

A Quad panel with senior Navy leadership from the four countries, India, Australia, Japan and the U.S., is expected as India gears up to host the Quad leader summit this year, which is expected to see some announcements on expanding maritime cooperation.

What can be expected in Ukraine? The Raisina Dialogue follows weeks of dramatic developments in the Russia-Ukraine war, including the showdown between Mr. Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Washington, followed by rounds of U.S.-Russia talks and then U.S.-Ukraine talks about a ceasefire, which will no doubt be a major point of discussion at the dialogue, and on its sidelines. Eleven of the 20 Foreign and other Ministers arriving for the dialogue are from Europe, including Ukraine Foreign Minister Antohi Sybaha.

In 2024, the numbers were even more skewed, with chief guest Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis and U.S. 21 Foreign Ministers present from Europe, making a concerted pitch for India to shift its position on Ukraine. This year, all eyes will be on discussions and debate that pit European leaders against those from the U.S., particularly Mr. Gabbard, who has in the past battled for better U.S.-Russia ties. However, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov, who used to be a regular speaker, will not attend. At the Raisina Dialogue in 2021, Mr. Lavrov faced a barrage of questions over the war in Ukraine during a session, that got extremely heated over the question of Russia joining talks for a ceasefire.

Also on the list is International Atomic Energy Agency chief Rafael Grossi, who will be an

important speaker on the war in Ukraine, and the possibility of reviving nuclear talks with Iran.

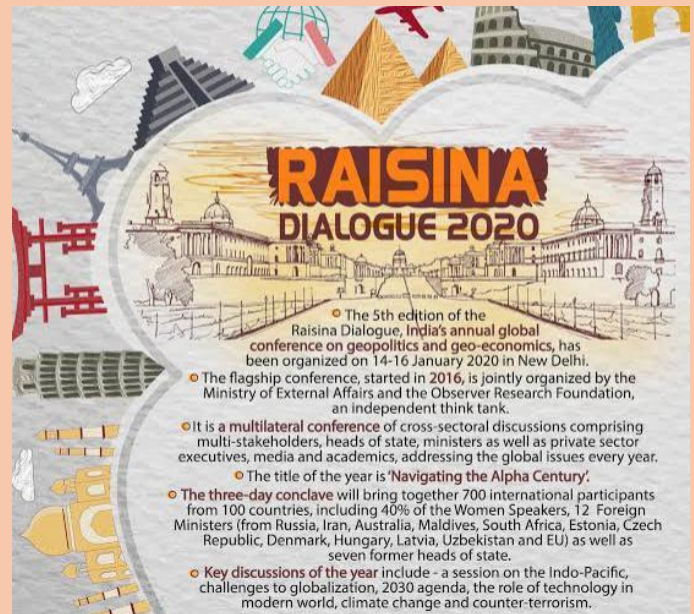
Who else is coming? The speakers' list at the Raisina Dialogue serves as a good barometer of India's relations with various countries, and which countries participate are often as important as those who miss the event. According to the list released by the Ministry of External Affairs, the Foreign Ministers of Bhutan, D. N. Uhangyel, Nepal, Arzu Rana Deuba; and the Maldives, Abdulla Khaleel, will attend the meet. Mauritius' Foreign Minister, Dhyanraj Ramful, will also be present.

Given tense ties with India's western neighbour, Raisina Dialogue does not invite Pakistani delegates. However, it is notable that no speakers from Bangladesh or representatives of the Yunus government are listed this year. The programme lists a speaker from China's Fudan University, which reflects the thaw in bilateral ties after the meeting between Mr. Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping last October.

Another country with which India may see a thaw this year is Canada, given the change in leadership. The Director of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, Daniel Rogers, who is in Delhi, could also attend the Dialogue. In addition, former Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper and former Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott, both regular attendees, will be present.

Despite the Indian government's attempts at improving ties with West Asia (GCC) and South East Asia (ASEAN), both regions aren't well represented again, a trend visible for the last few years. The only exceptions are the Philippines' Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Enrique Manalo, and Thailand's Foreign Minister, Maris Sangiamwong. Foreign Ministers from Ghana, Cuba, Peru, Antigua and Barbuda are the others attending from the Global South.

How did the Raisina Dialogue start? Launched in 2006 by the Ministry of External Affairs as a "flagship Indian international dialogue", the Raisina Dialogue aims to bring together leaders and thinkers from around the world. Envisioned by the government as a potential rival to the Munich Security Conference and Singapore's Shangri-La Dialogue, the Indian version is named after the Raisina Hills, where Rashtrapati Bhavan, key Ministries and Parliament are located in the capital.



- The 5th edition of the Raisina Dialogue, India's annual global conference on geopolitics and geo-economics, has been organized on 14-16 January 2020 in New Delhi.
- The flagship conference, started in 2016, is jointly organized by the Ministry of External Affairs and the Observer Research Foundation, an independent think tank.
- It is a multilateral conference of cross-sectoral discussions comprising multi-stakeholders, heads of state, ministers as well as private sector executives, media and academics, addressing the global issues every year.
- The title of the year is 'Navigating the Alpha Century'.
- The three-day conclave will bring together 700 international participants from 100 countries, including 40% of the Women Speakers, 12 Foreign Ministers (from Russia, Iran, Australia, Maldives, South Africa, Estonia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Hungary, Latvia, Uzbekistan and EU) as well as seven former heads of state.
- Key discussions of the year include - a session on the Indo-Pacific, challenges to globalization, 2030 agenda, the role of technology in modern world, climate change and counter-terrorism.

The **Raisina Dialogue** is India's premier global conference on geopolitics and geo-economics, jointly hosted by the **Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)** and the **Observer Research Foundation (ORF)** since 2016. Named after **Raisina Hill** in New Delhi, where India's most important government offices are located, it has evolved into a prominent platform for discussions on global challenges, policy responses, and international cooperation. Modeled after renowned global forums like the **Munich Security Conference** and **Shangri-La Dialogue**, it seeks to position India as a significant player in shaping global discourse.

Achievements and Evolution

Since its inception, the Raisina Dialogue has seen substantial growth in terms of participation and global influence. Its achievements can be outlined as follows:

1. Global Participation and Influence:

- The platform has brought together heads of state, ministers, military leaders, corporate executives, scholars, and journalists from over 100 countries.
- It has emerged as a prominent space for discussing critical global issues like security, energy, trade, and emerging technologies.

2. Strategic Partnerships:

- The Dialogue has facilitated partnerships and collaborations among nations on issues such as counterterrorism, digital governance, and sustainable development.
- It has helped India consolidate its image as a reliable and responsible stakeholder in global governance.

3. Diplomatic Outreach:

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- The Raisina Dialogue has served as a diplomatic tool for India, strengthening bilateral and multilateral ties by hosting foreign ministers, diplomats, and think tank representatives.
- It reflects India's strategic shift towards being a rule-shaper in the global order rather than a passive rule-taker.

4. Promoting Multilateralism:

- It has consistently championed a **rules-based international order**, promoting dialogue on **Indo-Pacific cooperation, climate change, digital connectivity, and global security**.
- The event also provides a stage to voice the concerns of the **Global South**, addressing inequalities and advocating for equitable solutions.

The 10th Edition of Raisina Dialogue (2025)

The 10th edition of the Raisina Dialogue, held from **March 17-19**, is themed "**Kalachakra**" (**Wheel of Time**), reflecting the evolving nature of global dynamics and India's growing role in shaping them. Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** inaugurated the event, and the keynote address was delivered by New Zealand Prime Minister **Christopher Luxon**.

Key Highlights:**1. Major Themes and Issues:**

- The primary discussions revolve around the **Ukraine conflict, US**

foreign policy shifts under President Trump, and Indo-Pacific strategy.

- Issues like **US-Russia relations, tariff policies, NATO dynamics, and maritime security** within the Quad framework are under the spotlight.

2. High-Profile Participants:

- The event features prominent speakers, including **US Director of National Intelligence Tulsi Gabbard, Special Assistant to President Trump Ricky Gill, and Senior Counsellor James Carafano.**
- A dedicated **Quad panel** discusses expanding maritime cooperation among **India, the US, Japan, and Australia.**

3. Global South Representation:

- While European representation is significant, the dialogue also features leaders from the **Global South**, including ministers from **Bhutan, Nepal, Maldives, Mauritius, Ghana, Cuba, and Peru.**
- The absence of **West Asian (GCC) and Southeast Asian (ASEAN)** representatives continues, reflecting India's diplomatic challenges in these regions.

4. Ukraine and Russia Dynamics:

- The Ukraine war remains a dominant topic, with **Ukrainian Foreign Minister Andrii Sybiha** attending. Notably, Russian Foreign Minister

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Sergey Lavrov is absent this year, highlighting the geopolitical shifts and diplomatic tensions.

Challenges

While the Raisina Dialogue has undoubtedly enhanced India's diplomatic outreach, it faces challenges related to **balancing geopolitical rivalries** and **addressing regional sensitivities**.

The absence of delegates from **Pakistan** and limited representation from **West Asia and ASEAN** reflects underlying diplomatic frictions.

RAISINA DIALOGUE 2023

- The 8th edition of India's flagship conference on geopolitics and geostrategy.
- The multilateral conference held annually in New Delhi.
- The event is organised by The Ministry of External Affairs in collaboration with the Observer Research Foundation (ORF) from March 2-4.
- Italian PM Giorgia Meloni was the chief guest and the keynote speaker at the inaugural session.
- Theme - "Provocation, Uncertainty, Turbulence: Lighthouse in the Tempest"

To maintain its relevance and influence, the dialogue must:

1. Broaden its **geographical representation**, especially from regions with strategic importance.

2. Address emerging challenges like **cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, and climate change** in a comprehensive manner.
3. Reinforce India's position as a bridge between **developed and developing nations**, promoting **inclusive dialogue**.

Prelims Practice Question

With reference to the Raisina Dialogue, consider the following statements:

1. The Raisina Dialogue is jointly organized by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and NITI Aayog.
2. It is named after Raisina Hill in New Delhi, where important government offices are located.
3. The primary focus of the Raisina Dialogue is on economic cooperation among South Asian countries.
4. The Raisina Dialogue was launched in 2016 and is modeled after the Munich Security Conference.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- a) 1 and 3 only
- b) 2 and 4 only
- c) 1, 3, and 4 only
- d) 2, 3, and 4 only

Answer:

b) 2 and 4 only

Explanation:

1. Statement 1 is incorrect because the Raisina Dialogue is jointly organized by the **Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)** and

PRAGNYA BHARATHI: Detailed News Analysis (DNA)

the **Observer Research Foundation (ORF)**, not NITI Aayog.

- Statement 2 is correct as the Dialogue is named after **Raisina Hill** in New Delhi, where important government offices, including **Rashtrapati Bhavan**, are located.
- Statement 3 is incorrect because the Raisina Dialogue primarily focuses on **geopolitics and geo-economics** at the global level rather than just economic cooperation among South Asian countries.
- Statement 4 is correct because the Raisina Dialogue was launched in **2016** and is modeled after renowned global platforms like the **Munich Security Conference**.

- It is an annual conference on geopolitics and geoeconomics, which aims to address the most challenging issues faced by the world.
- The conference takes place in New Delhi and is attended by people from political, business, media, and civil society backgrounds.

Institutions involved

- Delhi-based think tank Observer Research Foundation, in partnership with the Ministry of External Affairs, hosts the conference.
- Theme of the 2024 edition: "Chaturanga: Conflict, Contest, Cooperate, Create".



Therefore, the correct answer is **b) 2 and 4 only**.

Mains Model Question:

Discuss the significance of the Raisina Dialogue in India's foreign policy landscape. How has it contributed to enhancing India's global diplomatic outreach and strategic engagements?

The Raisina Dialogue, initiated in 2016, has emerged as India's flagship global conference on geopolitics and geo-economics, organized by the Ministry of External Affairs and the Observer Research Foundation. Named after Raisina Hill, it serves as a platform for global leaders, policy experts, diplomats, and strategic thinkers to discuss pressing international issues. Modeled after prominent global conferences like the Munich Security Conference, the Raisina Dialogue reflects India's aspiration to shape global discourse and assert its leadership on key international matters.

The significance of the Raisina Dialogue lies in its role as a diplomatic tool to project India's strategic autonomy and global outlook. It has enabled India to articulate its stance on various global challenges, from climate change to cybersecurity, and from regional security to multilateralism. The conference has witnessed participation from heads of states, ministers, and high-ranking officials from numerous countries, reinforcing India's role as a convener of critical discussions.

The Raisina Dialogue also aligns with India's quest to strengthen its role as a responsible global player. It fosters interactions among the Quad countries, focuses on the Indo-Pacific strategy, and addresses evolving security dynamics. The presence of global leaders and strategic experts underscores India's commitment to inclusive and open dialogue on global issues.

PRAGNYA BHARATHI: Detailed News Analysis (DNA)

Furthermore, the Dialogue has facilitated India's engagement with the Global South, reflecting its vision of a multipolar world. It has become an avenue for shaping new alliances and reinforcing old partnerships. The platform also allows India to balance its relationships amid great power rivalries, including the U.S.-China competition and the Russia-Ukraine conflict.

In essence, the Raisina Dialogue has established itself as an essential component of India's diplomatic strategy, projecting its leadership in global governance and fostering meaningful international cooperation.