

## **Indo- Myanmar Border management**

### **Why in news?**

\n\n

Myanmar was building a border demarcation fencing with India. The construction is currently on hold.

\n\n

### **How did the border problem between India and Myanmar emerged?**

\n\n

\n

- The formation of Myanmar as a separate State in 1935 and decolonisation of the sub-continent in 1947 divided ethnic communities living along the Indo-Myanmar border.

\n

- These communities, particularly Nagas, found the newly created boundary to be inconsistent with the traditional limits of the region they inhabited.

\n

- And they felt a deep sense of insecurity as they became ethnic minorities on both sides of the border.

\n

\n\n

### **What is FMR?**

\n\n

\n

- The people living in the Eastern districts of Nagaland and in the areas of NSAZ in Myanmar have close family ties and engage in cultural and economic exchanges.

\n

- In some instances, the imaginary border line even cuts across houses, land and villages.

\n

- People living on the Indian side, own land holdings including cultivated lands and forested areas across the border and are completely dependent on

it for their livelihood.

\n

- Also from the Myanmar side, a lot of villagers come to the Indian side to buy basic essentials.

\n

\n\n

· Therefore the Indian and Myanmar governments established the **Free Movement Regime (FMR)**, which allowed Nagas to travel 16 kilometres across the border on either side without any visa requirements.

\n\n

\n

- Taking advantage of the FMR, a sizeable number of students from NSAZ also study in schools on the Indian side of the border.

\n

\n\n

### **What are the shortcomings of FMR?**

\n\n

\n

- The FMR has been misused by locals to smuggle contraband in their head loads, which are not subject to inspection.

\n

- Militant groups have been using the porous border for moving cadres and arms.

\n

- Along with other active Indian insurgent groups, the NSCN-Khaplang (NSCN-K), which had unilaterally abrogated the ceasefire with the Government of India (GoI) in 2015, maintains its camps and training bases in NSAZ in Myanmar.

\n

- All these groups carry out illegal activities including launching strikes against Indian security forces and returning to their safe havens in Myanmar.

\n

- China has also been reportedly aiding some of these groups.

\n

- Policing such a large area marked by harsh terrain and dense forest is difficult.

\n

\n\n

## **What is the impact of the fence construction along the border?**

\n\n

- \n
- The ongoing activity of fence construction along the Indo- Myanmar has triggered apprehensions among the people living on either side of the border.
- \n
- The affected people mainly are Konyak, Khamniungan and Yimchunger Nagas who inhabit the areas of Eastern Nagaland in India and the Naga Self Administered Zone (NSAZ) in Myanmar.
- \n
- It would deprive them of the produce from their land and forest resources.
- \n
- From the security perspective, possible anti-establishment sentiments could destroy the peace along the Indo Myanmar border.
- \n

\n\n

## **How to manage the border between India and Myanmar?**

\n\n

- \n
- Suitable measures need to be initiated in order to establish trust and confidence amongst the affected populace.
- \n
- Tripartite talks involving the local stakeholders via state government, the Myanmar government and the GoI could be organised to address extant concerns.
- \n
- Socio-economic initiatives on either side of the border aimed at benefitting the local inhabitants by alleviating poverty and bringing greater development in the region should be worked out.
- \n
- A mutually acceptable arrangement addressing the security concerns of both the countries with minimum discomfort to the local inhabitants would be best way to address the border problem.
- \n
- The GoI on its part should provide an assurance that no construction of border fence will be undertaken on the Indian side without taking the affected population into confidence.
- \n

\n\n

## How the borders should be managed?

\n\n

\n

- In case national security concerns dictate the necessity of constructing a fence along the India-Myanmar border, options such as selective fencing, better use of technology, and regulated flow of cross-border movement, among other initiatives, can be examined.

\n

- Regulated borders with greater emphasis on developing people-to-people contact and cross-border trade initiatives are likely to yield greater security benefits.

\n

- It is however essential to take into confidence the affected populace and the local stakeholders prior to the finalisation and implementation of such plans.

\n

\n\n

\n\n

**Source: IDSA**

\n

