

## **Ayni Airbase**

**Prelims:** Current events of national and international importance | International relations

## Why in news?

India has quietly withdrawn from the Ayni airbase in Tajikistan — ending two decades of strategic military presence in central Asia.

- Ayni It was *India's only full-fledged overseas* military facility, giving it both a symbolic and strategic edge in central Asia.
- Location Near Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan.
- It shares close proximity to Afghanistan's Wakhan Corridor, which shares a boundary with the Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) and with China's Xinjiang province.



- **History** Originally built during the Soviet era; fell into disrepair post-USSR collapse.
- Indian role -
  - India renovated and modernized the base under a 2002 bilateral agreement, investing ~\$80 million.

- Hosted Indian Air Force (IAF) helicopters, maintenance facilities, and fuel depots.
- Used during the 2021 Kabul evacuation to assist Indian nationals.
- **Reason for withdrawal** Expiry of bilateral arrangement with Tajikistan (ended in 2022 and was not renewed).
- Strategic implications -
  - **Limits monitoring ability -** Its proximity to Afghanistan's Wakhan Corridor offered New Delhi valuable leverage especially in monitoring developments involving China and Pakistan.
  - **Diplomatic setback -** Seen as a blow to India's long-term strategic planning and regional diplomacy.
  - Increased dependence on maritime assets With no land-based presence, India may rely more on naval deployments for regional influence.
- Importance for India -
  - **Geopolitical Foothold** Provided India a rare military presence in Central Asia, enhancing its strategic depth.
  - **Proximity to Afghanistan & Pakistan** Enabled surveillance and rapid response capabilities in volatile regions.
  - **Symbol of Strategic Diplomacy** Reflected India's ambitions to counterbalance Chinese and Russian influence in the region.

India currently **does not** have a functional overseas military base in any other country.

## Reference

<u>Indian Express | Ayni airbase</u>

