

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India has quietly withdrawn from the Ayni airbase in Tajikistan — ending two decades of strategic military presence in central Asia.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

[Indian Express | Ayni airbase](#)