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 Myanmarese 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- Mynamr has triggered apprehensions among the people living on either side of the border.
\n
- The affected people mainly are Konyak, Khiamniungan 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 destroty the peace along the Indo Mynamnr 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 Myanmarese 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 shoul 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