

Myanmar Dam near Manipur

What is the issue?

- Myanmar is building a new dam, close to the border near Manipur.
- This has raised some concerns among the border villages in Manipur.

What is the project?

- The dam, called Tuidimjang, is being built on the Twigem river.
- Twigem river flows into Myanmar from Manipur..
- The dam is barely 100 metres from the zero line separating the two countries.
- International rules warrant border countries to check activities in No Man's Land.
- This applies to a 150-metre strip on either side of the boundary line.



What are the concerns?

- Border villagers in Kengjoi subdivision of Manipur's Chandel district are concerned of the project.
- The residents of Khangtung village recently reported to the district officials.
- Khangtung is inhabited by the Thadou tribe and is 137 km south of Manipur capital Imphal.
- The villagers, dependent on the river, are already facing water scarcity.
- Given the topography of the area, the new project could make it even more vulnerable.
- If the dam comes up, Khangtung and other Indian villages will be submerged.
- Villagers will have to be relocated and rehabilitated.

- This may have huge negative social, cultural and economic impact on the residents.

How are the internal dams in Manipur?

- **Mapithel** - Mapithel dam, initially known as Thoubal Multipurpose Project, aimed to produce 7.5MW of power.
- Irrigation and providing drinking water were also the objectives.
- Despite inking an understanding with the State government, the villagers were not facilitated with a proper relocation site.
- In June 2015, a tribal village named Chadong in Ukhrul district was submerged.
- **Khuga dam** - Taken up in 1980, the project lies south of Manipur's Churachandpur town.
- Lying dormant until 2002, it led to a cost escalation from the initial Rs. 15 crore to more than Rs. 350 crore in 2009.
- The project sanction by the Planning Commission was said to have inherent flaws.
- Resultantly, the power component of 1.5MW incorporated in the initial design was scrapped despite near-completion of a powerhouse.
- **Tipaimukh** - It is a mega hydroelectric project proposed on river Barak in Manipur 35 years ago.
- Bangladesh is against this project, as Barak flows into it from Manipur through southern Assam.
- It feeds the Surma and Kushiara rivers in Bangladesh.

What do they imply?

- Many of the internal dams in Manipur are already facing varied controversies and limitations.
- A number of ecological, political and procedural aspects of the projects are causes of concern for the region.
- The dam by Myanmar, close to the border, is a new threat to the ecological and water sustainability of the region.
- The Chandel district officials are expected to survey the dam construction site to assess the condition.

Source: The Hindu

Prioritising South Asia in Our Foreign Policy

What is the issue?

- India's stature in the international arena has been steadily growing over the years due to various structural and economic aspects.
- While other geopolitical issues are important, New Delhi must give its immediate neighbourhood in South Asia its fullest attention.

What are India's recent initiatives in the extended neighbourhood?

- ❖ **Palestine** - India has been very skilful in manoeuvring contentious issues in this region with considerable success like in the case of Israel and Palestine.
- ❖ India could, thus, successfully handle an Israeli PM's visit to India just prior to Mr. Modi's visit to Palestine, and yet avoid negative fallout.
- ❖ It could also separate the technological outreach of the Israeli PM Mr. Netanyahu's visit without having to take a clear stand on Jerusalem's status.
- ❖ Likewise, the bilateral with Palestine saw the conclusion of as many as six agreements and the expression of hope for full independence to Palestine.
- ❖ **UAE** - Trade, economic ties and counter-terror aspects have been on a growth curve, with massive investments too flowing India's way.
- ❖ **Oman** - There exists an established long standing friendship with Oman.
- ❖ Hence, option of closer naval co-operation and of reaching an agreement to give the Indian Navy access to "Duqm port" did not prove difficult.
- ❖ **ASEAN Outreach** - The 2018 republic day celebrations saw all 10 ASEAN countries being represented at the highest level, which was a grand success.
- ❖ But the recently concluded ASEAN-India Summit urged India to play a pro-active role in the Asia-Pacific region, without needing to take hard decisions.
- ❖ This is possibly a dampened support for the Quad Initiative (India, Japan, Australia and USA), for which ASEAN hasn't come out openly in support.
- ❖ Significantly, this is in striking contrast to the overwhelming support that these countries have extended to the "Belt and Road Initiative" of China.
- ❖ Despite such inconsistencies with ASEAN, it is still very manageable and what requires attention is the immediate neighbourhood (south Asia).

How does the scenario look in India's immediate neighbourhood?

- Trouble is mounting in almost all neighbouring countries, and India cannot succeed without looking at some hard options.
- **Nepal** - A leftist government has taken over in Nepal, whose leaders in the past have clearly taken a pro-China attitude vis-a-vis India.
- The responsibility of aiding the aspirations of the Terai population through ensuring a balanced constitutional setup weighs heavily on India.
- The challenge is that this has to be done without antagonising the Nepali state.
- **Bangladesh** - A special court in Dhaka recently convicted opposition BNP leader and three-time PM Khaleda Zia on corruption charges.
- As this debars her for contesting polls (elections are slated for 2019), the possibility of a prolonged unrest in Bangladesh is very much alive.
- Dealing with both Nepal and Bangladesh will need more than fine gestures; they will need far more closer monitoring.
- **Maldives** - Recently, political tensions have been mounting in Maldives due to the repressive regime, which is threatening to spill out of control.
- India has tacitly been backing the opposition and is vouching for a democratic solution from within Maldives and has largely been mincing words.
- Considering the increasingly pro-China tilt of the present dispensation and the gravity of the situation, although risky, India can't afford to be passive for long.
- Notably, a free trade agreement had been signed between Maldives and China recently, along with allocating for multiple infrastructure projects.
- Notably, anti-India activities and Saudi & Pakistan backed Islamic radicalists have been growing in strength in the island for a while now.
- **Pakistan** - Increasingly, Pakistan is resembling a failed state in the face of what seems like a virtual collapse of its public policy.
- As intuitive attitudes of the military and a free run of terrorists has come to prevail, this seems to be affecting India more than it is affecting Pakistan.
- Despite US warning Pakistan of dire consequences, there seems to be no course correction and anti-India propaganda and radicalism has been escalating.
- **Afghanistan** - The daily massacre of people even within urban districts have become common over the years in Afghanistan.

- Even the combined strengths of local police, Afghan military and the foreign forces aren't able to weed out the menace, partly due to Pakistan's hand.
- Despite periodic optimistic forecasts of the Taliban being in retreat, Afghan government is still reeling under intense pressure to even sustain itself.
- The collapse of the Afghan state does have severe consequences for India and other nations in the vicinity, which calls for decisive action.
- Apart from the human cost, New Delhi has spent over \$2 billion in providing humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan.

What needs to be done?

- A consensus across parties needs to emerge on pressing foreign policy concerns across domains for deriving the best possible outcomes.
- While West Asia, Asia Pacific and South East Asia are important domains, India's primary focus should remain in the south Asian neighbourhood.
- If India seems uninterested in ensuring peace and stability in the region, there would be an undesirable spike in the influence of extra-regional players.

Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT)

- India's City Union Bank suffered a cyber attack via the SWIFT financial platform.
- It is a messaging network that financial institutions use to securely transmit information and instructions through a standardized system of codes.
- SWIFT is headquartered in Belgium.
- It also brings the financial community together – at global, regional and local levels – to shape market practice, define standards and debate issues of mutual interest or concern.
- For money transfers, SWIFT assigns each participating financial organization a unique code with either eight or eleven characters

Swami Ramakrishna Paramahansa's Birth Anniversary

- Ramakrishna Paramahansa's birth anniversary was on February 18th.
- His spiritual movement indirectly aided nationalism, as it rejected caste distinctions and religious prejudices.
- Ramakrishna's religious and spiritual philosophy was centered on Shakti, Advaita Vedanta and universal tolerance.
- Foremost among his innumerable disciples was Swami Vivekananda, who was instrumental in establishing the philosophy of Ramakrishna at a global stage.

- Vivekananda established the Ramakrishna Mission in 1897 to carry out the visions of his Guru Ramakrishna.

Assam- Wildlife Protection

- In a major initiative for wildlife protection, the forest guards in Assam were given modern weapons to check poaching of rhinos, tigers and other wild animals.
 - Also for the first time wildlife fast-track courts have been set up to exclusively deal with poaching and wildlife crimes.
 - Assam has five national parks and 19 wildlife sanctuaries and is home to 91% of Indian rhinos.
 - The five national parks in Assam are
1. Kaziranga
 2. Manasa
 3. Nameri
 4. Rajiv Gandhi Orang
 5. Dibru Saikhowa



- Manas and Dibru saikhowa are the Biosphere reserve in the state.

Global Antimicrobial Resistance Surveillance System (GLASS)

- GLASS was developed by WHO to foster standardized AMR surveillance globally.
 - It released the first set of surveillance data on anti-microbial resistance recently.
 - Key Findings of GLASS are
1. AMR is widespread in both high and low income countries.
 2. The most commonly reported resistant bacteria were Escherichia coli (E. coli), Klebsiella pneumoniae, Staphylococcus aureus, Streptococcus pneumonia, and Salmonella spp.
 3. There is an alarming spike in the cases resistant to penicillin and ciprofloxacin.

Sambandh Initiative

- Western Naval Command hosted the Sambandh exercise last year.

19-02-2018

- Participants were from the 10 Indian Ocean Littoral countries Maldives, Myanmar, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Oman, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Malaysia and Mauritius.
- Naval officers and cadets from smaller countries that do not have big navies were welcomed aboard INS Vikramaditya -India's aircraft carrier as a part of the initiative.
- Apart from the Sambandh initiate, the Indian Navy sent its **Mobile Training Team (MTT)** to these countries.
- Training teams of the Indian Navy were sent to neighboring countries to train other countries cadets at their home base.

Map: Myanmar-Manipur border

- A dam being constructed by Myanmar across river close to the boundary with India has stoked fears of submergence and water scarcity in Manipur's Chandel district.
- The Indian states that border Myanmar are:

Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, Mizoram



- Tip to remember easily: Myanmar MMAN.