

India Myanmar Border To Be Fenced Amit Shah

Why In News

- **Union Home Minister Amit Shah** announced that the Centre has decided to **fence the entire length** of the currently **porous India-Myanmar border** to stop free movement of people. The decision comes as the country aims to tackle Maoist extremism and strengthen border security.



Announcement Is All About

- The Union government will soon **fence the 1,643 km border between India and Myanmar**, and will consider **ending its free movement regime (FMR)** agreement with the neighbouring country, Home Minister Amit Shah.



- The **FMR, implemented in 2018 as part of India's Act East Policy**, allowed residents of both countries living along the border **to travel up to 16 km** into each other's territory **without a visa**. Ending the agreement will restrict this movement. Mr. Shah said, while addressing the passing-out parade of 2,551 Assam Police commandos in Guwahati.
- Much of **India's 4,096 km border with Bangladesh** has been **double-fenced** to stop the unauthorised entry of people into India, a major concern for the northeastern States, especially Assam.
- "The government is also reconsidering India's FMR agreement with Myanmar and will soon end the free movement into India," Mr. Shah said.



Movement Regime With Myanmar

- India and Myanmar share a 1,643-km border along the Northeastern states of **Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh**, a porous border of which only 10 km is fenced in Manipur.
- The FMR with Myanmar, formalised in 2018 following the agreement between India and Myanmar on land border crossing, **allows tribes living along the border on either side to travel up to 16 km** inside the other country without a visa and stay up to **two weeks**.



- With the end of the FMR and the fencing of the border, it will be mandatory for **anyone coming into India from across the border to get a visa.**
- When the FMR was put in place in 2018, the Centre had referred to it as an **“enabling arrangement for movement of people”** which would “facilitate regulation and harmonisation” of the already existing free movement rights of people living along this border.



- Acknowledging the **customary fluidity of life along this border**, the government had said that besides boosting economic and social interaction between the two countries, it would “safeguard the traditional rights of the largely tribal communities residing along the border which are accustomed to free movement across the land border.”
- While the **Chin people living in Chin state of Myanmar**, contiguous with **Mizoram**, are of the same ethnicity as the **Mizos and the Kuki-Zomis of Manipur**, there is also a sizeable **Naga population in Myanmar**, largely in the **Naga Self-Administered Zone in Myanmar’s Sagaing region.**



- The Mizo-Chins and Nagas on both sides of the border share close social, economic and day-to-day ties.
- However, **recent developments have prompted security concerns** to take precedence over this. The rationale for this move is to check **the influx of illegal immigrants, drugs and gold smuggling**, as well as to “stop the misuse of FMR” by insurgent groups to carry out attacks on the Indian side and escape into Myanmar.



- The India-Myanmar border and its fluidity had grabbed attention last year with the **outbreak of the ongoing conflict in Manipur** in May, when both the state government and Meitei civil society referred to “uncontrolled illegal immigration” of Chin people from Myanmar as the root cause of instability in the region.
- Responding to these concerns during his visit to Manipur in May-end, Shah had said the Centre had undertaken the **tendering process for fencing another 80 km of the border** and begun surveys along the rest of the border.



- Shah had also referred to immigration as the root of the conflict while speaking in Lok Sabha in August. He had said that “**fears of a demographic change**” had been triggered by the settling of “Kuki brothers” in the forests of Manipur, following the military crackdown against the Chin resistance movement in Myanmar.



- While the **Manipur government has been actively advocating** the sealing of the India-Myanmar border, governments and civil society in **Mizoram and Nagaland have expressed their opposition.**
- Soon after reports emerged that the move was being planned, Mizoram Chief Minister Lalduhoma had met Prime Minister Narendra Modi and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar in Delhi, after which he told the media that the Mizos consider the India-Myanmar border “an imposed boundary” and that fencing it is “unacceptable”.