

Free Movement Regime with Myanmar

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What's in today's article?

- **Why in news?**
- **Indo-Myanmar border**
- **Free Movement Regime (FMR)**
- **News Summary: Free Movement Regime with Myanmar**
- **Issues raised by CM of Manipur**
- **Issue of refugees and illegal migrants**

Why in news?

- The Manipur state government has requested the Centre to permanently wind up the **Free Movement Regime (FMR)** along the Indo-Myanmar border.
- Recently, at a press meet, CM of Manipur said that the FMR has been the biggest impediment in Manipur's efforts to curb the influx of illegal migrants from Myanmar through the unfenced border.

Indo-Myanmar border

- **About**

- The Indo-Myanmar border runs for 1,643 km.
- The States of Arunachal Pradesh (520 km), Nagaland (215 km), Manipur (398 km) and Mizoram (510 km) have common border with Myanmar.

- **Demarcation of Indo-Myanmar border**

- Out of 1643 km, demarcation of 1472 km has been completed.
- There are **only two un-demarcated portions** along Indo-Myanmar:
 - Lohit sub-sector of Arunachal Pradesh-136 km
 - Kabaw valley in Manipur – 35 km.

- **Security Concerns along the border**

- **Secessionist movements**
 - The movement for Greater Nagaland comprising of areas in both India and Myanmar has dramatically destabilised the border.
- **Support to insurgents and terrorists in India**
 - Many of the Insurgents in the North Eastern States of India have ties with groups in Myanmar who provide political backing, economic assistance, logistic support, military training or arms supplies.
 - The **porous border also helps provide safe havens to the insurgents.**
- **Narcotics smuggling**
 - India is located near the Golden Triangle of drug production in the East (Northern Thailand, Laos and Myanmar), which has resulted in rampant drug trafficking through the country.
 - Trafficking of synthetic drugs to and from Myanmar is a concern.

- **Border management**

- **Security force along Indo-Myanmar border**
 - Fondly known as “Friends of the North East People”, the **Assam Rifles** is deployed in the North East for guarding the Indo-Myanmar Border.
- **Modern Weapons for surveillance and border security**
 - Modern weapons and equipment like Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV), Battle Field Surveillance Radar (BFSR), Laser Range Finder etc. are being used for border security.
- **Border Fencing**
 - In order to check the problem of infiltration, smuggling of contrabands and illegal activities in the Indo-Myanmar border area, the Government of India has initiated work to fence the area.
- **Comprehensive Border Infrastructure Project undertaken** to improve border infrastructure on India-Myanmar Border
- **ICPs:** The government of India decided to set up Integrated Check Posts (ICPs) at major entry points on our land borders.
- **Border Area Development Programme (BADP):** Various developmental works in the border areas have been undertaken by the MHA under the BADP as part of a comprehensive approach to border management.

Free Movement Regime (FMR)

- **About**

- The Free Movement Regime is a pact between India and Myanmar that allows tribes living along the border on either side to **travel up to 16 km inside the other country without a visa.**
- FMR is being seen as a part of the India's Act East policy.

- **Rationale behind FMR**

- Boundary between India & Myanmar was demarcated by the British in 1826.
- This effectively divided people of the same ethnicity and culture into two nations without seeking their opinion.
- Hence, need was felt to enable ethnically similar communities living across the borders to move freely without the need of a visa.
- The FMR was supposed to provide impetus to local trade and business.
 - However, it has been criticised for unintentionally aiding illegal immigration, drug trafficking, and gun-running.

- **Current status**

- However, the agreement has been defunct since 2020, first because of the Covid pandemic.
- After the military coup in Myanmar in 2021 and the continued escalation of its refugee crisis, **India suspended the FMR in September 2022.**

News Summary: Free Movement Regime with Myanmar

Issues raised by CM of Manipur

- **Permanently freeze the Free Movement Regime (FMR)**

- FMR has been the biggest impediment in Manipur's efforts to curb the influx of illegal migrants & drug trafficking from Myanmar through unfenced border.

- State is working towards **National Register of Citizens and fencing of the border with Myanmar**

- **On the issue of deployment of security forces**

- CM said that the security forces instead of being deployed at zero point, were found guarding the border 14 to 15 km inside Indian territory.

Issue of refugees and illegal migrants

- Since the military coup in Myanmar on February 1, 2021, the ruling junta has launched a campaign of persecution against the Kuki-Chin people.

- This has pushed large numbers of Myanmar's tribals across the country's western border into India, especially into Manipur and Mizoram, where they have sought shelter.
 - Mizoram, where a large section of the population has close ethnic and cultural ties with people across the border, has set up camps for more than 40,000 refugees, despite protests from the Union Ministry of Home Affairs.
 - Manipur too has received a chunk of illegal migrants over the past year and a half.
 - A committee set up by the state government to identify such migrants recently put their number at 2,187.
 - In September 2022, 5,500 illegal immigrants were caught in Moreh, and 4,300 were pushed back. Biometrics of these individuals have been recorded.
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Q1) Which India States share boundary with Myanmar?

Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Mizoram share international boundary with Myanmar. Both countries share a heritage of religious, linguistic and ethnic ties.

Q2) What are Integrated Check Posts (ICPs)?

Integrated Check Posts (ICPs) are entry and exit points on India's international land borders. They are trade facilitation centers that help boost bilateral trade and improve the movement of passengers across the border. ICPs are designed to facilitate the secure and seamless movement of people and goods across borders.

Source: [To check illegal influx from Myanmar, asked Centre to freeze visa-free entry: Manipur CM | Times of India](#) | [Hindustan Times](#)

Source: <https://vajiramandravi.com/current-affairs/myanmar/>

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