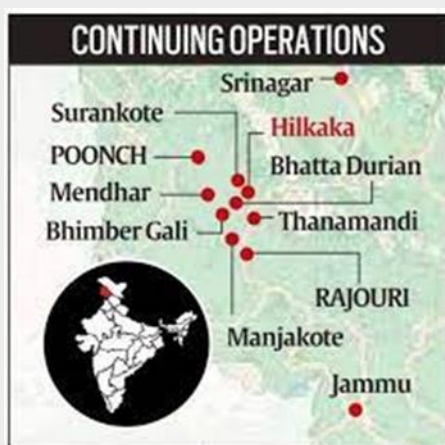


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## 1. Army launches Op Sarvashakti



### Why in news?

The Army has launched Operation Sarvashakti in the Rajouri-Poonch sector of Jammu and Kashmir, deploying forces on both sides of the Pir Panjal range to target terrorists who have carried out a series of attacks on troops in the area.

There were three major attacks on the security forces in 2023, and over the past few years, 20 soldiers have been killed in terrorist ambushes in this area. Most terrorists here are believed to be foreigners.

Operation Sarvashakti, as part of which at least three brigades of additional troops are being deployed in the sector from various reserve and strike corps formations in order to increase the density of troops and, therefore, the likelihood of contact with terrorists, recalls an earlier operation by the Army in the same forests more than two decades ago.

Back in 2003, Indian forces launched Operation Sarpvishay to flush out terrorists who had infiltrated from across the border and set up camps in the thick forests south of the Pir Panjal range, especially in the Hilakaka area in Poonch.

### What was Operation Sarpvishay?

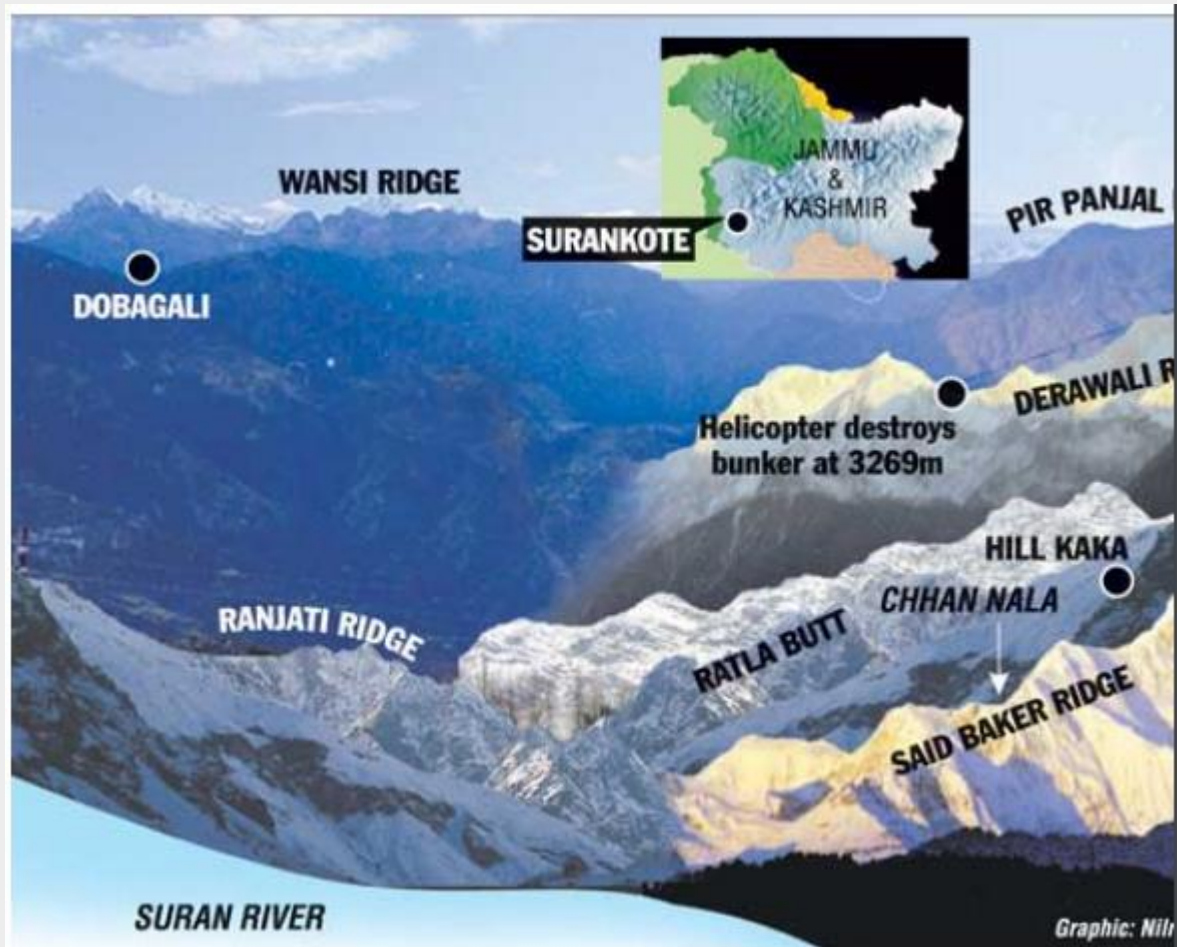
Following several encounters in the area, the Army carried out, from April 2003 onward, what was until then its biggest counter-insurgency operation in Jammu and Kashmir.

About 100 terrorists were killed in the operation. A large number of weapons of various kinds, dumps of explosives, and stores including some 7,000 kg of ration, medicines, and communication equipment were recovered. Some 40-50 terrorist hideouts were demolished in the operation.

### Why is this area important strategically?

The areas south of Mendhar leading to the Pir Panjal range through Hilakaka constitute among the shortest routes of access for infiltrators from across the LoC into the Kashmir valley.

The terrorists chose this region to set up camps because dominating this area can potentially provide a conduit to personnel in the event of a military operation by the Pakistanis, and easier infiltration of terrorists.



The dense forests and steep mountain slopes offer both adequate cover and visual domination of the area. Terrorists were able to merge with the foliage whenever Indian troops carried out searches in the area, and to inflict casualties in case of contact. All of these locational advantages for terrorists remain intact to some degree even now.

### **What was the outcome of Operation Sarpvishay?**

The operation flushed out terrorists and brought peace to the area that lasted until 2017-18, even as terrorist incidents continued to take place in the valley. But since 2021, this region has seen several high intensity attacks on security forces.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Internal Security

Source: The Indian Express

## **2. Turkey finally backs Sweden's NATO bid**

### **Why in news?**

Sweden's attempt to join NATO cleared a major hurdle after Turkey's parliament supported its membership. For a new country to join the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), all the existing members have to approve it. Turkey and Hungary had been opposing Sweden's entry for almost the past two years.

### **Why does Sweden want to join NATO?**

Sweden has not fought a war in two centuries, staying neutral through the two World Wars and the Cold War. In recent years, while it joined the European Union and collaborated with NATO, it showed no intention of actually joining the military alliance its powerful neighbour, Russia, is hostile to.

However, this neutrality had to be abandoned after Russia invaded Ukraine. With public opinion increasingly in favour of joining NATO, both Sweden and Finland applied for membership in 2022. While Finland's bid was cleared, Sweden ran into stiff opposition from Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orban.

Once a country is a NATO member, an attack on its territory is considered an attack on the US-led alliance, and all 31 members are obliged to defend each other.

### **Why was Turkey opposing Sweden's bid?**

Turkey had accused Sweden of going soft on groups it sees as terrorists, such as the Kurdish militant outfit the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). Quran-burning protests held in Sweden, which its government says are protected under freedom of speech laws, further soured its relationship with Turkey.

When Turkish legislators cleared Sweden's bid recently, Fuat Oktay, a senior member of Erdogan's party, told parliament that Sweden had tightened its anti-terrorism laws, cracked down on the PKK's activities, and lifted restrictions on arms sales to Turkey.

Erdogan had also linked Turkey's support to Sweden with the US agreeing to sell 40 F-16 fighter jets to Ankara. While the US had not said the deal would depend on Turkey's Sweden actions, the sale is expected to go through now.

### **Why is Hungary opposed?**

Hungary had been seen as following Turkey's lead in blocking Sweden. Its grievances with the country include Stockholm's negative remarks about the rule of law and state of democracy under Orban. Orban is also more friendly with Russia than other NATO nations. After Turkey's move, Orban said that he had invited Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson to Budapest to discuss "future cooperation in the field of security and defence as allies and partners."

### **What will Sweden bring to NATO?**

Once Sweden becomes a member, almost all of the Baltic Sea coastline, except that in Russia's control, will become NATO territory. This will provide the alliance strategic bases close to Russia, make supply lines more streamlined, and make it easier to defend assets in the sea.

Sweden's military, though numerically small, is modern and experienced in past NATO missions. Importantly, it has advanced aircraft and submarine capabilities.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Organisations

Source: The Indian Express

### **3. Manipur ministers and MLAs meet Arambai Tenggol members: Who are the radical Meitei group?**

#### **Why in news?**

Almost all of the Meitei MLAs in Manipur as well as Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha MPs representing valley areas of the state were at Kangla Fort of Imphal morning to meet the leaders of radical Meitei group Arambai Tenggol.

The development came after Arambai Tenggol issued "summons" to "all the ministers and MLA belonging to the valley districts.

#### **Who are the Arambai Tenggol group?**

According to sources, Arambai Tenggol started in 2020 as a cultural outfit, but soon transformed into a radical organisation. It is one of the two hardline Meitei organisations suspected to be involved in a large number of Meitei-Kuki clashes, which broke out in May 2023. The other group is Meitei Leepun.

Both the organisation had armed themselves and their membership grew rapidly during the conflict.

#### **Why did the group 'summon' Manipur's political representatives?**

The meeting was organised to discuss the demands of Arambai Tenggol. The demands included delisting of Kukis from the Scheduled Tribes list, deportation of refugees to camps in Mizoram, border fencing, replacement of Assam Rifles with other paramilitary force and revoking Suspension of Operations (SoO) agreement between the Centre and Kuki militant groups.

Relevance: GS Prelims

Source: The Indian Express