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## **1. It is time to operationalise the Indian Defence University**

### **Introduction**

The Greek thinker Thucydides is said to have remarked that a nation which makes a distinction between its scholars and its warriors will have its thinking done by cowards and its fighting done by fools. It is no surprise that several nations have established 'defence universities' to promote academic rigour and enhance strategic thinking in their armed forces. In India's own neighbourhood, it is reported that Pakistan has created two universities for its armed forces, while China has three, although a report of the Australian Strategic Policy Institute lists more than 60 Chinese universities with military and security links. In this context, the absence of the long overdue Indian Defence University (IDU) is concerning.

### **Professional Military Education**

While the nature of war remains constant, its changing character imposes a premium on military education and the academic preparation required to cope with current and future security challenges. The dynamic and chaotic character of warfare currently on display in Europe and West Asia means that military officers are expected to produce results in the face of nebulous initial information and rapidly changing circumstances. To meet complex challenges, officers are empowered through a well-constructed Professional Military Education (PME) continuum that augments their abilities to correspond with changing assignments and increasing responsibilities over long career spans.

### **Slow progress**

The Indian armed forces, like others, need a broad-based education system, founded upon academic rigour. This realisation came soon after independence when, in 1967, the Chiefs of Staff Committee mooted the setting up of a Defence Services University. In 1982, a Study Group constituted by the COSC emphasised the need to set up an apex educational body for the armed forces in the form of an IDU.



Two decades later, in the wake of the Kargil conflict, a committee was established under the chairmanship of Dr K. Subrahmanyam to examine this issue. Based on its recommendations, in May 2010, 'in principle' approval was accorded for setting up of the IDU in Gurgaon. Despite some optimistic reportage in 2017-18, the progress on setting up of the IDU has been rather slow.

### **Loopholes in existing system**

The several world-class training and education institutions run by India's armed forces constitute a rich and vast ecosystem of professional training. However, they lack an overarching integrated PME framework and a multi-disciplinary approach to strategic thinking. Although the armed forces have affiliations with universities for degree

courses, this is not the optimal solution. The IDU would remedy such shortcomings in India's PME system by providing a central institution of higher military learning through a well-qualified faculty with a mix of academicians along with serving and retired officers from the military and civil services. In effect, this would unite theory with practice.

The university's curriculum would vary among the various colleges and other institutions that would be governed by it. However, it would need to offer a variety of additional subjects relevant to national security and defence – both in sciences and humanities.

### **An idea whose time has come**

The realisation of the IDU is long overdue. Some experts have suggested that after the establishment of the Rashtriya Raksha University (RRU) in Gujarat, there may not be a need for IDU. This argument is flawed, because comparing the IDU and RRU is like comparing apples and oranges. Neither does the RRU Act specify education related to 'defence' in its objectives, nor is its curriculum focused solely on military requirements for management of war and execution of plans.

The IDU as an idea has come and delays attached in its commissioning come at the cost of defence preparedness, strategic culture, and inter-service integration. The need of the hour is to operationalise the IDU at the earliest, so that the first building-blocks of joint warfighting can be put in place through a well-calibrated and futuristic military education curriculum.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: The Hindu

## **2. 3-phase ceasefire deal that Hamas backed; Israel rejected as 'soft'**

### **Why in News?**

Israeli forces seized the control of Gaza's vital Rafah border crossing — the sole crossing between Egypt and southern Gaza recently. The development came a day after Palestinian militant group Hamas had agreed to a three-phased deal for a ceasefire and hostages-for-prisoners swap. Israel rejected the deal, saying it was not acceptable because its terms had been "softened".

Based on details available so far, the deal that the Palestinian group said it had agreed to included the following:

#### **Phase one**

- \* A 42-day ceasefire, during which Hamas would free 33 Israeli hostages, alive or dead, in return for Israel releasing 30 children and women for each released Israeli hostage, based on lists provided by Hamas according to the earliest date of detention.
- \* From the first day, entry of intensive and sufficient quantities of humanitarian aid, relief materials, and fuel would be allowed. A total 600 trucks per day, including 50 fuel trucks, of which 300 would be for northern Gaza would arrive.
- \* Hamas would release three Israeli hostages on the third day of the agreement, and then release three more hostages every seven days, prioritising women if possible, including civilians and conscripts.

- \* In the sixth week, Hamas would release all remaining civilian hostages covered by this phase. Israel would release the agreed number of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli prisons.
- \* Israel would then partially withdraw troops from Gaza, and allow the free movement of Palestinians from south to north Gaza.
- \* Cessation of military flights over the Gaza Strip would take place for 10 hours per day and 12 hours on the day of releasing the hostages and prisoners.
- \* On the third day after releasing the first Palestinian prisoners, Israeli forces would completely withdraw from al-Rashid street in northern Gaza, and all military sites would be dismantled.
- \* On the 22nd day of the first phase, Israeli forces would withdraw from the centre of the strip, east of Salah al-Din road to an area near the Israeli border.



#### **Phase two**

- \* Another 42 days with an agreement to restore a "sustainable calm" in Gaza.
- \* The complete withdrawal of most Israeli troops from Gaza.
- \* Hamas would release Israeli reservists and some soldiers in return for Israel releasing Palestinians from jail.

#### **Phase three**

- \* Completion of exchanging bodies.
- \* Blockade of Gaza Strip would end.
- \* Implementation of a 3-5-year plan for reconstruction of Gaza would start. Homes, civilian facilities, and infrastructure, would be rebuilt. Compensation would be given to all those affected, under the supervision of a number of countries and organisations including Egypt, Qatar, and the UN.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Issues

Source: Indian Express

**3. Maharashtra to translocate tigers to Sahyadri reserve: Role of wildlife corridors in tiger conservation**

## Why in News?

To revive the population of tigers in Sahyadri Tiger Reserve (STR) — the lone tiger reserve in the Maharashtra western region — the state's forest department will soon translocate tigers from Tadoba-Andhari Tiger Reserve (TATR) in Chandrapur district.

However, the objective of the project can only be achieved if the Sahyadri-Konkan wildlife corridor — forests in STR, Goa, and Karnataka serve as the corridor — is secure enough and free from human disturbances, according to the experts.



## But first, why is Maharashtra planning to translocate tigers to STR?

The STR, located in northern Western Ghats, was established in January 2010 and straddles Kolhapur, Satara, Sangli, and Ratnagiri districts in western Maharashtra. It comprises Chandoli National Park and Koyna Wildlife Sanctuary.

The tiger population in the region has been historically low due to poaching, poor prey base, and changing habitat. Even after the STR was notified, the number of tigers did not increase as breeding tigers did not colonise the reserve.

Photo evidence of tiger presence within the boundaries of STR has been few and pugmark evidence has shown the presence of seven to eight tigers from time to time.

One way the population can increase is through the inflow of tigers from the forests, located towards the south of STR, in Goa and Karnataka, especially with the strengthening of the wildlife corridor. However, the spike in tiger numbers can take years this year.

As a result, the translocation of tigers has been opted for short-term outcomes.



### **Is translocation the best approach for tiger recovery?**

Tiger translocation projects have been undertaken in India since 2008. Sariska Tiger Reserve, in 2008, and Panna Tiger Reserve, in 2009, have witnessed successful tiger reintroduction and translocation projects. There have also been failures and shelving of reintroduction plans, like in the case of Satkosia Tiger Reserve in Odisha, which was the country's first inter-state translocation project.

Tiger corridors are crucial for the long-term and sustainable success of a translocation project. Even after translocations, one must ensure that corridors are strengthened and they are free of major disturbances. This will ensure dispersal of tigers to other source population areas.

### **What role do wildlife corridors play in conservation?**

Corridors are essentially habitats and pathways that connect wildlife populations, which are fragmented by human settlements and infrastructure works.

They are crucial for the long-term survival of the tiger population as they help guard against localised extinctions and ensure the exchange of gene flow, which helps in population diversity. Tigers have large home ranges and often travel long distances in search of mates and food. In doing so, they make use of these wildlife corridors and cross several human-dominated landscapes. The role played by corridors in conservation is a well-established one and has been incorporated into policy decisions as well.

Mitigation measures such as underpasses, and wildlife crossings are now routinely ordered to safeguard tigers and other wildlife in projects where linear infrastructure projects fragment habitats.

### **Examples**

The construction of an overpass on the National Highway- 7 to protect the migratory route of tigers underneath between the Kanha and Pench Tiger Reserves is one instance of embedding mitigation measures to protect corridors.

Tigers routinely use the space beneath the elevated stretch of the highway to cross the forests. In 2014-15, the National Tiger Conservation Authority and Wildlife Institute of India (WII) mapped 32 major tiger corridors in the country across four broad tiger landscapes – Shivalik Hills and Gangetic plains, Central India and Eastern Ghats, Western Ghats, and the North East Hills.

### **What is the importance of the Sahyadri-Konkan corridor?**

The Sahyadri-Konkan corridor or the Sahyadri-Radhanagari-Goa-Karnataka corridor is crucial for the long-term survival of tiger populations in northern Western Ghats. This corridor connects the source population area in Kali Tiger Reserve in Karnataka to the forests in Goa's hinterland, which in turn provides tigers connectivity to Radhanagari Wildlife Sanctuary, conservation reserves in Sindhudurg district and STR.

The high occurrence of human-dominated settlements and development activities fragments this corridor at several locations, posing a threat to tiger movement and raising the chances of man-animal conflict. With authorities planning the translocation of tigers to Sahyadri,

strengthening this corridor is crucial. Without those efforts, even a breeding population of tigers would face difficulties in dispersing to other forests.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Environment

Source: Indian Express

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