

## 1. M4 carbine used by Pahalgam terrorists

### Why now?

A preliminary investigation into the deadly attack on tourists near Pahalgam has revealed that the terrorists opened fire with AK-47s, and more interestingly, American-made M4 carbines.



**Pahalgam attack: Terrorists armed with AK-47, M4 carbines targeted tourists in 40-min rampage**

### Why is this significant?

Russian-origin AKs are the weapon of choice for most militants, terrorists, and rebel groups around the world. Their simplicity, reliability, and affordability make them ideal for combatants with limited means, operating for long durations in difficult conditions without much logistics support.

American weapons do not fit this bill. In general, they require better training and upkeep to be effective, and are much more expensive.

This is what makes an M4 carbine a somewhat unlikely weapon in the hands of terrorists. The Pahalgam attackers

carried M4s indicates that they are highly sophisticated operatives, and not the run-of-the-mill disgruntled youth.

That said, it is not completely unheard of for terrorists to carry M4s, especially in the very recent past.

### How did the terrorists obtain M4s?

There are two possible explanations for how the Pahalgam attackers got hold of M4 carbines. The first is to do with the United States's exit from Afghanistan in 2021. At the time they pulled out from Kabul, the Americans had been fighting in the country for two decades. In the process, they had developed massive stockpiles of weapons in Afghanistan — much of which they left behind, ostensibly for the Afghan forces to use against the Taliban.

Of course, the Afghan resistance folded almost immediately after the American exit, leaving the Taliban with the weaponry left behind. While some of this the Taliban kept for itself, huge caches of guns and ammo were sold to the highest bidder in Afghanistan's busy arms markets. The beneficiaries: a motley collection of rebel groups, militias, tribal warlords, and, of course, terrorists.

The other explanation for how the terrorists got hold of weapons is more straightforward: they were supplied by the Pakistani state, presumably the ISI. Pakistan also has a decent stockpile of M4s, which is used by its special forces.

### **Why is the M4 carbine a lethal weapon?**

Following the military adoption of the Armalite AR-15 as the M16 rifle in the 1960s, the United States spent two decades developing an effective carbine on the same platform. Carbinos are essentially rifles which are lighter, and have a shorter barrel than a standard rifle. They are meant to be used by highly mobile units, or for urban warfare, and were originally developed as rifle-caliber arms for mounted units.

The M4 carbine was officially adopted by the US in 1994, and has since seen use by over 60 militaries around the world. Chambered in the 5.56×45mm NATO cartridge, the M4 can fire upto 950 rounds a minute, and has a maximum effective range of around 600 metres.

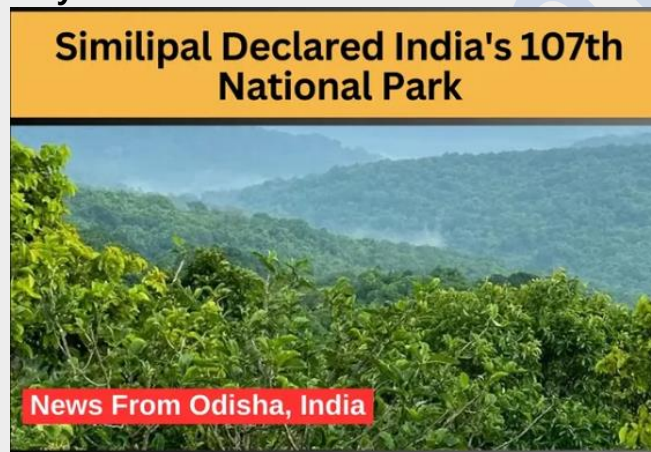
Weighing only 3.5 kilos (fully loaded), it is lighter than even most modern AKs with plastic magazines and stocks.

Relevance: GS Prelims; Internal Security

Source: Indian Express

## **2. Simlipal designated Odisha's second national park, after Bhitarkanika**

### **Why in News?**



Simlipal is a national park and tiger reserve in the Mayurbhanj district in the Indian state of Odisha covering 2,750 km<sup>2</sup>. Out of the total area, national park spans an area of 845.70 km<sup>2</sup>. The remaining part of the 2,750 km<sup>2</sup> area will be considered as a wildlife sanctuary.

### **107th National Park**

It is the 107th national park and the second in the eastern state, after the Bhitarkanika. Simlipal National Park

derives its name from the abundance of red silk cotton trees growing in the area.

### **Part of UNESCO recognised Biosphere Reserve**

This protected area is part of the UNESCO World Network of Biosphere Reserves since 2009. Simlipal, located in Odisha's Mayurbhanj district, is home to 40 royal Bengal tiger.

Relevance: GS Prelims; Environment

Source: The Hindu

## **3. Simla Pact and all other bilateral agreements held in abeyance**

### Why in News?

In response to India's decision to suspend the 1960 Indus Waters Treaty in the aftermath of the Pahalgam terror attack, Pakistan's government said it could hold the 1972 Simla Agreement and "all other bilateral agreements with India" in abeyance.

#### Simla Agreement & the LoC

The agreement signed in 1972, in the aftermath of the 1971 India-Pakistan war (which Pakistan lost), primarily deals with two things: **how bilateral relations are to be conducted between the two countries, and the recognition of the Line of Control (LoC) as the de facto border.**



#### What does the Simla Agreement entail?

The agreement was signed in Shimla on July 2, 1972 after three days of talks between Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, victorious from the 1971 Bangladesh War, and Pakistan Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto who had suffered a crushing defeat and the division of Pakistan in the war. The talks, for which the Soviet Union did much of the preparatory discussions through Indian and Pakistani envoys in Moscow, focused on two major issues. First, the future of post-war ties between India and Pakistan, including the return of more than 93,000 Pakistan prisoners of war; second, the resolution of the dispute over Jammu and Kashmir, where they agreed to "settle their differences by peaceful means through bilateral negotiations or by any other peaceful means mutually agreed upon between them". In addition, the Simla

agreement saw the first formal recognition of Bangladesh as a sovereign entity in a bilateral treaty.

#### What was the reaction in both countries?

The Simla Agreement led to severe criticism of Mrs. Gandhi in India, for not forcing Pakistan to make the ceasefire line the International Border, instead renaming it the Line of Control (LoC); and of Mr. Bhutto in Pakistan for agreeing to resolve the dispute peacefully and without recourse to the United Nations or other third-party mediators. In Srinagar, Sheikh Abdullah's criticisms stemmed from the fact that neither side had consulted the Kashmiri people.

#### How has Pakistan violated the pact?

In the years that followed, Pakistan violated the agreement many times, by funding and arming terror groups in Kashmir as well as sending troops across the LoC that led to the Kargil conflict in 1999. It has approached the UN and other countries over the issue, which is a breach of the terms both sides had agreed upon.

The Indian Parliament's declaration in 1994 that all of Kashmir including Pakistan Occupied Kashmir, was an integral part of India, and the 2019 amendment of Article 370, had made the Simla agreement quite irrelevant.

#### What are the 'other agreements' that Pakistan referred to that could be affected?

While Pakistan did not name any other agreement by name, the Shehbaz Sharif government's reference to "all other" bilateral agreements could refer to a number of different accords the

two countries have signed over the years after being in armed conflict several times from the first Kashmir war in 1948 to Kargil in 1999.

The Nehru-Liaquat pact signed in 1950 relates to the treatment of minorities in their respective countries. The Bilateral Protocol on Visits to Religious Pilgrimages signed in 1974 facilitates hundreds of Hindu and Sikh pilgrims to 15 temples and gurdwaras in Pakistan, as well as Muslim pilgrims to five mosques and shrines in India. For the moment, both sides have indicated that the Kartarpur corridor agreement in 2019 between the Narendra Modi and Imran Khan governments will remain in place.

Other agreements, that relate to confidence-building measures and information sharing could also be affected. In 1988, India and Pakistan signed an agreement to inform each other of their nuclear installations and facilities every year on January 1. In 1991, they signed an agreement for the pre-notification of flight testing of all ballistic missiles, as well as an agreement on preventing airspace violations. Since February 2021, India and Pakistan have a ceasefire agreement in place, that was first agreed to in 2003. Any military operation by India on terror camps or other locations in Pakistan, to which Pakistan has threatened to retaliate, could see the ceasefire agreement collapse. In addition, India's decision to suspend the Indus Waters treaty could also have a follow-on effect, with Pakistan threatening to take India to international courts and calling the stoppage of any water an "act of war". While India is an upper riparian state to Pakistan and Bangladesh, it is also a lower riparian state to China, that has on occasion withheld cooperation with India on the Brahmaputra and other rivers. All three neighbouring countries will follow India's actions on the Indus closely.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Relations

Source: The Hindu

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