



Thar Desert

Why in News

The **Pakistan Army** is holding a **month-long exercise** code-named '**Jidar-ul-Hadeed**' in the **Thar Desert**. The aim is to **prepare for conflict in extreme desert environments**.

- A **multinational naval exercise** hosted by Pakistan, **Aman-2021**, has also begun in the Arabian Sea. **45 countries**, including the USA, Russia, China and Turkey, will be participating in the exercise.

Key Points

▪ Name:

- The name, Thar is **derived from thul**, the general term for the region's sand ridges.

▪ Location:

- It is located **partly in Rajasthan state, northwestern India**, and **partly in Punjab and Sindh provinces, eastern Pakistan**.

▪ About the Area:

- The Thar Desert is **an arid region** that covers over 2,00,000 sq km. It forms a **natural boundary** along the border between India and Pakistan.
- The surface consists of **aeolian (wind-deposited) sand** that has accumulated over the past 1.8 million years.
- The desert presents an undulating surface, with **high and low sand dunes** separated by sandy plains and low barren hills, or **bhakars**, which rise abruptly from the surrounding plains.

- The dunes are in continual motion and take on varying shapes and sizes.
- **Barchan**, also spelled **Barkhan**, crescent-shaped sand dune produced by the action of wind predominately from one direction. One of the commonest types of dunes, it occurs in sandy deserts all over the world.

▪ Surrounding Areas:

- It is bordered by the irrigated **Indus River plain** to the west, the **Punjab Plain** to the north and northeast, the **Aravalli Range** to the southeast, and the **Rann of Kachchh** to the south.

▪ Climate:

- The **subtropical desert climate** there results from **persistent high pressure and subsidence** at that latitude.

- The prevailing **southwest monsoon winds** that bring rain to much of the subcontinent in summer **tend to bypass the Thar to the east**.

▪ Saline Lakes:

- Several **playas** (saline lake beds), locally known as **dhands**, are scattered throughout the region.

▪ **Flora and Fauna:**

- The region produces herbaceous plants like **cactus, neem, khejri, acacia nilotica** among others. All these plants can accommodate themselves to high or low temperatures and difficult climatic conditions.
- The desert also houses the residents of the wild like the **leopard, the Asiatic wild cat** (*Felis silvestris ornata*), **the chousingha** (*Tetracerus quadricornis*), **the chinkara** (*Gazella bennettii*), **the Bengal desert fox** (*Vulpes bengalensis*), **the Blackbuck** (*antelope*) and several species of reptiles.

Source:TH

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