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Mountain Passes in Himalayas : India

Overall, the Himalayan mountain system is the world's highest, and is home to the world's highest peaks, the Eight-thousanders. There are 14 Himalayan peaks with elevation over 8,000 meters (26,000 ft). The rugged terrain makes few routes

through the mountains possible. Many times a few questions are asked in every competitive exam of government job on this topic. They are discussed as below

Aghil Pass (Karakoram-Ladakh): Situated to the north of K2 in the Karakoram at an elevation of about 5000 m above the sea level, it joins Ladakh with the Xinjiang (Sinkiang) Province of China. It remains closed during the winter season from November to the first week of May.

Banihal Pass (Jawahar Tunnel): Connects hill areas of Jammu to the Kashmir Valley. Situated at an elevation of 2835 m in the Pir-Panjal Range, joins Jammu with Srinagar. The pass remains snow covered during the winter season. The Jawahar Tunnel (named after Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru), inaugurated in December 19.56, was constructed for round-the-year surface transport.

Bara Lacha (Himachal Pradesh with Leh-Ladakh): Situated in the state of Jammu and Kashmir at an altitude of 4843 m. It is on the National Highway connecting Manali and Leh. Being a high mountain pass, it remains snow covered from November to mid-May.

Bomdi La (4331 m, Arunachal Pradesh): Situated to the east of Bhutan in the Greater Himalayas in Arunachal Pradesh at an altitude of about 2600 m above sea level, it connects Arunachal Pradesh with Lhasa, the capital of Tibet. It remains closed in the winter season owing to snowfall and adverse weather.

Burzail Pass (Srinagar with Kishan-Ganga Valley): Situated at an altitude of more than five thousand feet above sea level, this pass connects the Kashmir Valley with the Deosai Plains of Ladakh. Being snow covered during the winter season it remains closed for trade and transport.

Chang-La (Ladakh with Tibet): Situated at an elevation of over 5270 m, it is a high mountain pass in the Greater Himalayas. The road after Chang-la is extremely steep, leading to the small town of tangtse. The pass has a temple dedicated to Chang-la Baba after whom the pass has been named. Being snow-

covered, it remains closed during the winter season.

Debsa Pass: Situated at an elevation of 5270 m above sea level, it is a high mountain pass in Greater Himalayas between the Kullu and Spiti districts of Himachal Pradesh. This pass provides an easier and shorter alternative to the traditional Pin-Parbati Pass route between Kullu and Spiti.

Dihang Pass: Situated in the state of Arunachal Pradesh at an elevation of about 4000 feet this pass connects Arunachal Pradesh with Mandalay (Myanmar).

Diphu Pass (Arunachal Pradesh with Mandalay in Myanmar): Situated in the eastern part of Arunachal Pradesh, Diphu Pass provides an easy and shortest access to Mandalaya (Myanmar). It is a traditional pass between India and Myanmar which remains open throughout the year for transportation and trade.

Imis La: Situated at an elevation of over 4500 m, this pass provides an easy access between Ladakh and Tibet (China). It has a difficult terrain, steep slopes, and remains closed during the winter season.

Khardung La: Situated at an elevation of more than six thousand m above sea level, it is the highest motorable pass in the country. It joins I.eh with Siachin glacier. The road, however, remains closed during the winter season.

Khunjerab Pass (Karakoram): Situated at an altitude of more than five thousand feet in the Karakoram Mountains, it is a traditional pass between Ladakh and the Sinkiang Province of China. It remains snow covered during the winter season from November to mid-May.

Kora La Pass: on the Nepal-Tibet border at the upper end of Mustang. The Kali Gandaki Gorge (a graben), transects the main Himalaya and Transhimalayan ranges. Kora La is the lowest pass through both ranges between K2 and Everest, but some 300 metres (980 ft) higher than Nathula and Jelep passes further east between Sikkim and Tibet.

Jelep La (4538 m): Situated at an elevation of 4538 m above sea level, this pass connects Sikkim with Lhasa. It passes

through the Chumbi Valley.

Lanak La: Situated at an altitude of about five thousand metres in the Aksai-Chin (Ladakh), it connects Ladakh with Lhasa. The Chinese have constructed a road to connect the Xinjiang (Sinkiang) Province of China with Tibet.

Likhapani (Arunachal Pradesh): Situated at an altitude of more than four thousand metres above sea level, the Likhapani Pass joins Arunachal Pradesh with Myanmar. For trade and transport, it remains open throughout the year.

Lipu Lekh (Uttarakhand): Situated in the Pithoragarh District, it connects Uttarakhand with Tibet. The pilgrims for Mansarovar Lake travel through this pass. The pass is one of India's important border post for trade with China. Landslides in the rainy season and avalanches in winter create great problems for movement and transportation.

Mana Pass: Situated at an elevation of 5611 m above sea level in the Greater Himalayas, it connects Uttarakhand with Tibet. It remains snow covered for about six months during the winter season.

Mangsha Dhura Pass: Situated at an elevation of more than five thousand metres in the district of Pithoragarh, the Mangsha Dhura Pass connects Uttarakhand with Tibet. The pilgrims for Mansarovar cross this pass. Landslides create great problems for tourists and pilgrims.

Muling La (Uttarakhand): Situated north of Gangotri, this seasonal pass joins Uttarakhand with Tibet. It remains snow covered during the winter season.

Nathu La (Sikkim): Nathu La is located on the Indo-China border. The pass, at 4310 m above sea level, forms part of an offshoot of the ancient Silk Road. Nathu-La is one of the three trading border posts between India and China. After the 1962 war it was reopened in 2006.

Niti Pass: Situated at an altitude of 5068 m above sea level, the Niti Pass joins Uttarakhand with Tibet. It remains snow covered during the winter season between November and mid-May.

Pangsang Pass (Arunachal Pradesh): Situated at an elevation of more than four thousand metres above sea level, this pass connects Arunachal Pradesh with Mandalaya (Myanmar).

Pensi La: Situated in the Greater Himalayas at an elevation of more than 5000 m above sea level, this pass connects the Valley of Kashmir with Kargil (Ladakh). It remains snow covered from November to mid-May.

Pir-Panjal Pass: The traditional pass from Jammu to Srinagar, this pass lies on the Mughal Road. After partition of the Subcontinent, the pass was closed down. It provides the shortest and easiest metalled road access from Jammu to the Valley of Kashmir.

Qara Tagh Pass: Located in the Karakoram Mountains at an elevation of more than 6000 ft above sea level, this pass was an offshoot of the Great Silk Road. It remains snow covered during the winter season.

Rohtang Pass: Located at an elevation of 3979 m above sea level, this pass connects the Kullu, the Lahul and Spin' valleys of Himachal Pradesh. It has excellent road access, constructed by the Border Road Organisation (BRO). Traffic jams are common occurrences caused by the heavy movement of military vehicles, buses, taxis, trucks and goods carriers.

Rupin Pass: The majestic high altitude pass is situated across the rupin river in Uttarakhand, starts from Dhaula in Uttarakhand and end at Sangla in Himachal Pradesh. The uninhabited Rupin Pass located at an elevation of 4650 m (15,250 ft) in the great Himalayan ranges and consist of deep dark valleys, icy slopes and snow fields

Shencottah-Gap: Located in Western Ghats, this pass connects the Madurai city of Tamil Nadu with Kottayam city of Kerala. Shencottah is a small town also near this pass in Tamil Nadu.

Shipki La: Located at an altitude of more than 4300 m above sea level through the Satluj Gorge, the Shipki-La joins Himachal Pradesh with Tibet. It is through this pass, the river Satluj enters India, from Tibet. The pass (Indian National Highway 22) is India's third border post for trade

with China after Nathula in Sikkim and Lipulekh in Uttarakhand. It remains snow covered during the winter season. **Thang La (Ladakh):** Located at an elevation of 5359 m above sea level, it is a mountain pass in Ladakh (J & K). It is the second highest motorable mountain pass in India after Khardung La.

Traill's Pass: Located at an elevation of 5212 m above sea level in the Pithoragarh and Bageshwar districts of Uttarakhand, it is situated at the end of the Pindari Glacier and links Pindari Valley to Milam Valley. Being steep and rugged, this pass is very difficult to cross.

Thorong La: The high point of the Annapurna Circuit, it connects the Manang District to the Mustang District in Nepal.

Zoji La: Located at an altitude of 3850 m above sea level, it joins Srinagar with Kargil and Leh. Because of heavy snowfall, it remains closed from December to mid-May. The Border Road Organisation (BRO) has been trying to keep the road open for most part of the year. Beacon Force of Border Road Organisation (BRO) is responsible for clearing and maintenance of the road during the winter season. Recently, the Srinagar-Zoji-La Road has been declared a National Highway (NH-1D) by the centre.

Southwest monsoon is weakening as Indian Ocean warms rapidly (Geo, Climate ,

GS 3, GS 1)

A study shows that surface temperatures of the Indian Ocean have risen by up to 1.2°C in the past century, much larger than warming trends in other tropical oceans

✘ Schematic illustration of the mean conditions (left) and weakening trend (right) of the monsoon

Days after India Meteorological Department (IMD) downgraded its southwest monsoon forecast for 2015, a study shows that rapid warming of the Indian Ocean is responsible for reduced rainfall over parts of South Asia during the past century.

The study, led by Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology scientist Roxy Mathew Koll, used data from 1901 till 2012 and found a decreasing trend in summer monsoon rainfall over the central Indian subcontinent. While rainfall decreased over the region from south Pakistan up to Bangladesh, central India saw a significant reduction of up to 10 to 20 per cent in mean rainfall.

The findings of this study contradict previous studies that had shown a warmer ocean and increased land-sea temperature difference would lead to a stronger Indian monsoon.

“The changes in the Indian Ocean and correspondingly in the monsoon became prominent since the 1950s,” says Koll. “The trends have been steady since though there are decadal variabilities also.”

Koll and his team found that land-sea temperature difference, a key monsoon driver, has actually reduced over the South Asian region because the ocean has warmed much faster. During the past century, the ocean surface temperatures of the Indian Ocean have risen by up to 1.2°C, much larger than the warming trends in other tropical oceans. At the same time, the Indian subcontinent land mass has witnessed “subdued” warming due to reasons which have not yet been established.

Koll says these findings are typical of the Indian Ocean. “The land-sea temperature difference is increasing everywhere in the northern hemisphere, except in the Indian Ocean-South Asian domain,” he adds.

The study explains that ocean warming also affects monsoon circulation. A warmer ocean sees large-scale upward motion of moist air. This is compensated by subsidence (downward movement) of dry air over the subcontinent, resulting in surplus rains over the Indian Ocean at the cost of the monsoon rains over land.

The study was published in Nature Communications journal on Tuesday. Results of the study have wider implications for food security in the Indian subcontinent as agriculture is still largely rain-fed.

Climate models show that the Indian Ocean will continue to warm and Koll warns the threat of anthropogenic warming is manifesting itself closer home. “We need

to be as watchful of the changes in the Indian Ocean as we are about other oceans and land-atmosphere systems. This is a global issue linked to greenhouse gas emissions and needs to be tackled at all possible levels," he says.

If the southwest monsoon is deficient yet again this year, Indian farmers are headed for their fifth consecutive crop damage and an unprecedented agrarian crisis.