

INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS- BILATERAL, GROUPINGS, ORGANISATIONS**China's block: on not listing Azhar as global terrorist**

China's decision to block the listing of Jaish-e-Mohammad chief Masood Azhar as a global terrorist at the UN Security Council is both a setback to India's post-Pulwama diplomatic strategy and a reality check on ties with China at present.

Background

- After the February 14 attack, claimed by the JeM, the government had made the listing of Azhar a focus in its diplomatic efforts.
- It reached out to several governments, and shared a dossier on Azhar with each member of the Security Council, who are all members of the 1267 ISIL and al-Qaeda sanctions committee.
- A special effort was made with Beijing, which has blocked the Azhar listing in the past, including just after the 2008 Mumbai attacks.
- From 2016 to 2018, India's proposals to list Azhar, with evidence of JeM involvement in the Pathankot airbase attack, were also foiled by China, which placed holds on the listing, and then vetoed it.
- The vetoes came despite the fact that the JeM is banned, and in the UNSC listing it is noted that Azhar, as its leader and founder, accepted funds from Osama bin Laden.
- China, as the one country that has refused to allow Azhar's name on the list, is well aware of the evidence against him, but is not ready to withdraw its objections.
- It is clear that despite India-China relations improving after the Wuhan summit in April 2018, China is unwilling to align itself with India on its concerns on cross-border terrorism emanating from Pakistan.

Challenges and resistance

- China's stand is regrettable and condemnable, and it has been consistent on this issue.
- New Delhi must now consider whether it wishes to accept this as a fait accompli, or confront Beijing to try to persuade it to change its stand by means of incentives or coercion.
- This is a challenge, as any kind of concerted international pressure from the Western countries in this regard has in the past only served to be counterproductive.
- It is also unlikely that the suggestions being offered by some political groups, of cutting imports from China and other punitive actions, will yield much.

Steps That can be taken

- The government may be more successful if it identifies the incentives it can offer China in the next few months to review its position.
- While some of those incentives would be bilateral, the Chinese spokesperson's hint that dialogue between New Delhi and Islamabad, and even possible "triangular" talks including Beijing, is indicative of China's thinking.
- The government must also not lose sight of the bigger picture: that the UNSC cannot enforce its own listings, and other leaders who have been sanctioned in the past remain free and unencumbered.
- While listing Azhar at the UNSC is an unfinished task, the larger issue remains: to ensure that Pakistan takes substantive action against Azhar, the JeM and other terror groups that are threatening India.
- China, with its economic and strategic leverage with Pakistan, may be better-placed to help in this matter.

IPU-UN Women map of Women in Politics

Women's representation in political decision-making continues to rise slowly, with slight improvements since 2017, according to the data presented in the 2019 edition of the biennial IPU-UN Women map of Women in Politics. The map was launched at a press conference during the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW 63) at the United Nations headquarters in New York.

Key Highlights of the report:

- The map, which presents global rankings for women in the executive and parliamentary government branches as of 1 January 2019, shows the proportion of women ministers is at an all-time high at 20.7 per cent, 2.4 percentage points higher compared to 2017. It also shows that the types of portfolios women ministers hold are diversifying.
- The global share of women Members of Parliament (MPs)—24.3 per cent—has increased by nearly one point compared with 2017. The share of women parliamentary speakers also increased by 0.6 percentage points to 19.7 per cent, and the share of women deputy speakers increased by 1.6 percentage points to 28.2 per cent.
- However, women's representation in top-level leadership has decreased from 7.2 per cent of elected Heads of State to 6.6 per cent (10 out of 153), and from 5.7 per cent of Heads of Government to 5.2 per cent (10 out of 193).
- Among countries in Asia, Pakistan progressed from having no women ministers since 2012 to reaching its highest-ever share of women ministers at 12 per cent.
- In Europe, Slovenia dropped the most percentage points since 2017 from 50 per cent to 25 per cent women ministers. Lithuania no longer has women in ministerial positions, compared to 2017 when there were three out of 14, or 21.4 per cent.
- The number of countries with no women ministers decreased from 13 in 2017 to 11: Azerbaijan, Belize, Brunei Darussalam, Iraq, Kiribati, Lithuania, Papua New Guinea, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Saudi Arabia, Thailand and Vanuatu.
- The types of portfolios held by women ministers are shifting.
- Strikingly, more women are in charge of portfolios traditionally occupied by men compared to 2017: 30 per cent more women ministers cover Defence, 52.9 per cent more women cover Finance, and 13.6 per cent more women cover Foreign Affairs.
- Nine countries, up from six in 2017, have 50 per cent or more women in ministerial positions:
 - 7%: Spain.
 - 6%: Nicaragua.
 - 4%: Sweden.
 - 3%: Albania.
 - 9%: Colombia.
 - 9%: Costa Rica.
 - 9%: Rwanda.
 - 50%: Canada.
 - 50%: France.

Way ahead:Equal representation in government positions is fundamental for a democracy to be truly representative and effective. Despite some positive movement, the overwhelming majority of government leaders remain male. It is a shared responsibility between men and women to change this and ensure gender equality at all political levels. It is important to identify the main barriers that are stopping women from accessing decision-making positions. More women in politics leads to more inclusive decisions and can change people's image of what a leader looks like.

INDIAN ECONOMY**India Energy Modelling Forum**

- The NITI Aayog and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) organized the first workshop on development of the India Energy Modelling Forum (IEMF).
- The IEMF seeks to provide a platform for policy makers to study important energy and environmental issues and ensure induction of modelling and analysis in informed decision making process.
- The Forum aims to improve cooperation and coordination between modeling teams, the Government of India, knowledge partners and think-tanks, build capacity of Indian institutions, and identify issues for joint modeling activities and future areas of research.

What is Energy Modelling?

- Energy modeling or energy system modeling is the process of building computer models of energy systems in order to analyze them.
- Such models often employ scenario analysis to investigate different assumptions about the technical and economic conditions at play.
- Outputs may include the system feasibility, greenhouse gas emissions, cumulative financial costs, natural resource use, and energy efficiency of the system under investigation.
- Governments maintain national energy models for energy policy development.

Outcomes of the forum

- Discussions on energy modelling in India and the world explored how energy modelling can play an important role in decision-making.
- The panelists laid focus on bridging the rural-urban divide and factoring in energy pressures from the informal economy within models.
- Deliberations included a spotlight on how the impact of the evolving character of India's cities, industries and especially the transport sector should be included in the any India-centric models.
- The shift towards electric mobility, an increasing emphasis on mainstreaming of renewable energy options and overarching environmental concerns were also stated as key factors for determining India's energy future.

UNNATEE (UNlocking NATional Energy Efficiency Potential)

- Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) has developed a national strategy document for accelerating energy efficiency in India. PwC India has assisted BEE in executing this assignment.
- The strategy document titled UNNATEE (Unlocking NATional Energy Efficiency potential) describes a plain framework and implementation strategy to establish a clear linkage between energy supply-demand scenarios and energy efficiency opportunities.
- The document offers a comprehensive roadmap to address India's environmental and climate change mitigation action through energy efficiency measures.
- This exercise is first of its kind, clearly delineating the energy efficiency targets for the respective demand sectors up to the state levels.
- Developing India's blueprint of effective energy efficiency strategy is a leap towards stimulating energy efficiency ecosystem and enabling reduction of the pressure on demand.

About BEE

- The BEE is a statutory body under the Ministry of Power, Government of India.
- It assists in developing policies and strategies with the primary objective of reducing the energy intensity of the Indian economy.
- BEE coordinates with designated consumers, designated agencies, and other organizations to identify and utilize the existing resources and infrastructure, in performing the functions assigned to it under the Energy Conservation Act.

ENVIRONMENT- CONSERVATION, BIO-DIVERSITY AND ISSUES

Climate Vulnerability Index for India on the anvil

The Department of Science and Technology (DST) will be commissioning a study to assess the climate risks faced by States in India. This follows an assessment of the global warming risks faced by 12 Himalayan States.

Climate Vulnerability Index

- Last year the IIT at Mandi and Guwahati, and the IISc Bengaluru, coordinated with authorities of 12 Himalayan states to evolve a common methodology, and determine how districts there are equipped to deal with the vagaries of climate change.

- The researchers prepared a 'vulnerability index' of each of these States based on district-level data.
- Vulnerability would be a measure of the inherent risks a district faces, primarily by virtue of its geography and socio-economic situation.
- The eight key parameters included: percentage of area in districts under forests, yield variability of food grain, population density, female literacy rate, infant mortality rate, percentage of population below poverty line (BPL), average man-days under MGNREGA and the area under slope > 30%.

Ranking of the states

- On a scale ranging 0-1, 1 indicating the highest possible level of vulnerability, at the top of the scale were Assam with a score of 0.72 and Mizoram at 0.71, whereas Sikkim, with an index score of 0.42 was relatively less vulnerable.
- This doesn't mean that States with a lower score are safe in an absolute sense.
- In fact, some districts in Uttarakhand [at 0.45 and at the lower end of the scale] are more vulnerable than those in Assam.

Different factors

- Different factors contributed to a State's vulnerability.
- In Arunachal Pradesh, the key factors are low female literacy and high percentage of population above BPL whereas in Nagaland the key issues are loss of forest cover, steep slope and high yield variability.

Despite objections, Bannerghatta National Park's Eco-Sensitive Zone curtailed

Bannerghatta National Park's Eco-Sensitive Zone (ESZ), which provides a regulated buffer zone around protected areas, will remain at 168.84 sqkm despite thousands of citizens formally objecting to the reduction of nearly 100 sq. km. as compared to the original proposal.

The new ESZ will range from 100 metres (towards Bengaluru) to 1 kilometre from the periphery of the protected area.

What are Eco-Sensitive Zones?

- An ecologically sensitive area is one that is protected by the government given the sheer number of species, plants and animals endemic to the region.
- According to the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, the government can prohibit industrial operations such as mining, sand quarrying and building thermal power plants in sensitive areas.
- The definition offered by the MoEF: An ecological sensitive area is a bio-climatic unit (as demarcated by entire landscapes) in the Western Ghats wherein human impacts have locally caused irreversible changes in the structure of biological communities (as evident in number/ composition of species and their relative abundances) and their natural habitats.
- To categorise an area as ecologically sensitive, the government looks at topography, climate and rainfall, land use and land cover, roads and settlements, human population, biodiversity corridors and data of plants and animal species.

Citizens' opposition ignored

- When the ESZ notification for Bannerghatta National Park was issued in October 2018, citizens were given 60 days to submit their objections.
- Environmental and civic action groups swung into action and encouraged people to submit their objections to the MoEFCC against the 100 sqkm reduction of ESZ.
- The fear of many was that this reduction would lead to more quarrying in the area.

QUOTE OF THE DAY

What doesn't kill you simply makes you STRONGER.