

INTERNATIONAL RELATION

Pakistan Violating Freedom of Air

Recently, India has launched a direct flight between Srinagar and Sharjah (UAE) operated by budget airline GoFirst (formerly known as GoAir). The flight was to operate through Pakistani airspace. However, the flight was denied permission to enter Pakistan and the flight had to take a longer route to reach the destination.

This has raised the concern of Pakistan violating the first freedom of the air.

Key Points

Freedom of Air:

- The freedom of air means a country grants airlines of a particular country the privilege to use and/or land in another country's airspace.
 - Freedom of air rule emanates from the Chicago Convention in 1944.
 - The signatories to the convention decided to set rules that would act as fundamental building blocks to international commercial aviation.
 - The convention provides Nine freedoms of air, but only the first five freedoms have been officially recognized by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO).
1. **First Freedom Right:** It is granted by one State to another State or States to fly across its territory without landing. In the case of the GoFirst flight (Indian carrier) was using the airspace of Pakistan (the second country) and was landing in the UAE (the third country).
 2. **Second Freedom Right:** The right or privilege, in respect of scheduled international air services, granted by one State to another State or States to land in its territory for non-traffic purposes. This means an Air India flight from New Delhi to New York can land at a British airport to get refuelled without embarking or disembarking passengers.
 - **Third Freedom Right:** To put down, in the territory of the first State, traffic coming from the home State of the carrier.
 - **Fourth Freedom Right:** To take on, in the territory of the first State, traffic destined for the home State of the carrier.
 - **Fifth Freedom Right:** To put down and to take on, in the territory of the first State, traffic coming from or destined to a third State.

India's Options:

- Pakistan's denial of airspace is arbitrary and against the principles laid down by the Chicago convention. Earlier also, there are several such instances where Pakistan has denied access to its airspace.
- India can take up this issue with the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO).

2. Regional Security Dialogue on Afghanistan: Delhi

In the coming days, India will be hosting the 'Delhi Regional Security Dialogue on Afghanistan'. The meeting will be held at the level of National Security Advisors (NSAs) and will be chaired by India's NSA Ajit Doval.

Key Points

About the Meeting:

- **Invited Participants:** India's top security establishment, the National Security Council Secretariat, has taken the lead in organising the in-person meeting. Invitations were sent to Afghanistan's neighbours such as Pakistan, Iran, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, and other key players including Russia, and China.
 - **Need:** After the withdrawal of US forces and the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan, India is concerned about security in the region.
 - **Objective:** In this context, India has taken this initiative to organise a conference of regional stakeholders and important powers on the country's current situation and future outlook.
 - **India's Interest:** This meeting could be India's attempt to secure for itself a seat at the table to decide the future course of action on Afghanistan. The meeting also reflects the need to actively engage with the world to protect India's security interests.
 - **Participants' Response:** The Central Asian countries, as well as Russia and Iran, have confirmed participation.
1. The enthusiastic response is a manifestation of the importance attached to India's role in regional efforts to promote peace and security in Afghanistan.
 - **Pakistan and China's Denial:** Pakistan's National Security Advisor has held that he would not attend the meeting.
 1. China has also decided to skip a regional security meeting due to scheduling difficulties, but is open to maintaining discussions with India through bilateral channels.
 2. India is of the view that the denial by Pakistan to attend this meeting reflects its mindset of viewing Afghanistan as its protectorate.

India's Stakes in Afghanistan:

- **Strategic Advantage:** India's strategy in Afghanistan is guided by the desire to prevent a government that would readily provide Pakistan with strategic depth and a safe haven for terror groups.

- **Deploying Soft Power:** India has opted to pursue a 'soft power' strategy to engage Afghanistan, preferring to contribute substantially in the civilian sector rather than in defence and security.
 - **Developmental Projects:** India is particularly active in the construction, infrastructure, human capital building and mining sectors. Besides, it has also identified the telecommunications, health, pharmaceuticals, and information technology and education sectors for cooperation.
 - **Economic Aid:** Within the framework of two bilateral agreements, India has pledged over USD 2 billion in aid to Afghanistan. And, by the end of the year 2017, the investment has already crossed USD 3 billion. This makes India one of the largest investors in Afghanistan's stability and the quest for economic and social development.
 - **Connectivity Projects:** India has also agreed to build the 600-km-long Bamiyan – Herat rail link which will serve to connect the Hajigak mines to Herat.
1. Further, India is developing the Iranian port of Chabahar which will be linked to Afghanistan via the Delaram-Zaranj highway.
 2. If peace is established in Afghanistan, it could become a major trading hub as a corridor of connectivity in the heart of Asia.

India's Viewpoint on Afghanistan:

- India is not ready to directly deal with the new Taliban dispensation in Afghanistan.
- India reiterates that Afghanistan should:
 1. Not allow safe havens for terror on its soil.
 2. The administration should be inclusive.
 3. The rights of minorities, women, and children must be protected.
 4. The Afghanistan peace process should be led, owned and controlled by the Afghan people.

Way Forward

- **Russian Support:** Russia has cultivated links with the Taliban in recent years. India would need Russia's support in any form of direct engagement with the Taliban.
- **Bonhomie With China:** India should talk with China, with the objective of finding a political settlement and lasting stability in Afghanistan.
- **Engaging with Taliban:** Talking to the Taliban would allow India to seek security guarantees from the insurgents in return for continued development assistance or other pledges as well as explore the possibility of the Taliban's autonomy from Pakistan.

SOCIAL ISSUE

Global Drug Policy Index 2021

Recently, the inaugural Global Drug Policy Index was released by the Harm Reduction Consortium. It is a data-driven global analysis of drug policies and their implementation which comes at a time when the Indian government is reviewing the provisions of the Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic substances act 1985.

The Harm Reduction Consortium is a global consortium of networks aiming to challenge the global "war on drugs", scale up access to harm reduction services, and advocate for increased resources for harm reduction.

Key Points

- About the Index: It is a unique tool that documents, measures and compares national-level drug policies.
- It provides each country with a score and ranking that shows how much their drug policies and their implementation align with the United Nations principles of human rights, health and development.
- The Index provides an essential accountability and evaluation mechanism in the field of drug policy.
- It evaluates the performance of 30 countries covering all regions of the world.

Major Findings:

- The global dominance of drug policies based on repression and punishment has led to low scores overall, with a median score of just 48/100, and the top-ranking country (Norway) only reaching 74/100.
- Standards and expectations from civil society experts on drug policy implementation vary from country to country.
- Inequality is deeply seated in global drug policies, with the top-ranking 5 countries scoring 3 times as much as the lowest-ranking 5 countries. This is in part due to the colonial legacy of the 'war on drugs' approach.
- Drug policies disproportionately affect people marginalised on the basis of their gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation and socio-economic status.
- There are wide disparities between state policies and how they are implemented on the ground.
- With a few exceptions, the meaningful participation of civil society and affected communities in drug policy processes remains severely limited.

India's Performance:

- **Ranking:** India's rank is 18 out of 30 countries. It has an overall score of 46/100.

• **Scores:**

1. Using extreme sentencing and responses, it has a score of 63/100.
2. Health and harm reduction, 49/100.
3. Proportionality of criminal justice response, 38/100.
4. Availability and access of internationally controlled substances for the relief of pain and suffering, 33/100.

IMPORTANT FACTS FOR PRELIM

Swarna Jayanti Fellowship: DST

The Department of Science & Technology (DST) has selected 17 scientists for the Swarna Jayanti fellowship. They were awarded for their innovative research ideas and the potential of creating an impact on Research and development (R&D) in different disciplines, the Science and Technology Ministry.

Key Points

- The Swarna Jayanti Fellowships scheme was instituted by the Government of India to commemorate India's fiftieth year of Independence (1997).
- It provides special assistance and support to a selected number of young scientists with a proven track record to enable them to pursue basic research in frontier areas of science and technology.
- The award consists of a Fellowship of Rs. 25000 per month in addition to the salary drawn from the parent Institute along with a Research Grant of Rs. 5 lakh per annum by Department of Science and Technology (DST) for a period of 5 years.
- 1. In addition to fellowship, grants for equipment, computational facilities, consumables, contingencies, national and international travel, and other special requirements, if any, are covered based on merit.
- 2. The fellowships are scientist specific and not institution-specific, very selective, and have close academic monitoring.
- Scientists selected for the award are allowed to pursue unfettered research with freedom and flexibility in terms of expenditure as approved in the research plan. The project should contain innovative research ideas and it should have a potential of making an impact on R&D in the discipline.
- The projects submitted by the selected Fellows are considered for funding by the Science & Engineering Research Board (SERB) as per SERB norms. SERB is a statutory body under the Department of Science and Technology, established by an Act of the Parliament of India in 2009.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns. The COVID-19 pandemic has again stressed on the importance of the role of parents in supporting the early learning of young children which is well captured in National Early Childhood Care & Education (ECCE) Curriculum framework. Discuss the need and benefits of the same. (250 words)

Ans:

Introduction

According to UNICEF, early childhood is defined as the period from conception through eight years of age. Early childhood care and education (ECCE) is more than preparation for primary school. It aims at the holistic development of a child's social, emotional, cognitive and physical needs in order to build a solid and broad foundation for lifelong learning and wellbeing. Target 4.2 of SDG 4 aims that by 2030, to ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education.

Body

Need for ECCE

- Early childhood is a time of remarkable growth with brain development at its peak.
- It is crucial to the overall development of children, with impacts on their learning and even earning capabilities throughout their lifetimes.
- Over 85% of a child's cumulative brain development occurs prior to the age of 6, indicating the critical importance of appropriate care and stimulation of the brain in a child's early years for healthy brain development and growth.
- In a recent study by the Vidhi Centre for Legal Policy, 45% of the 650+ households surveyed in urban Maharashtra reported that they prioritise their older child's education over ECE.
- Studies have found that the act of making conversation with your child in the early years has significant gains on language skills they develop.
- It is, therefore of the utmost importance that every child has access to quality early childhood care and education (ECCE).

Benefits of ECCE

- The overall aim of ECCE will be to attain optimal outcomes in the domains of physical and motor development, cognitive development, socio-emotional-ethical development, cultural/artistic development, and the development of communication and early language, literacy, and numeracy.

- It also includes a focus on developing social capacities, sensitivity, good behaviour, courtesy, ethics, personal and public cleanliness, teamwork and cooperation.
- These years lay the foundations for her/ his learning and holistic development.
- Children will be better prepared for primary school and will reach better education outcomes.
- Quality ECCE also helps reduce repetition and drop-out rates.
- Positive outcomes are even more pronounced among children from vulnerable groups.
- It helps promote human resource development, gender equality and social cohesion, and to reduce the costs for later remedial programmes.
- An overview of 56 studies across 23 countries found impacts on health, education, cognitive ability, and emotional development.

Way forward

- For universal access to Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), the Anganwadi Centres will be strengthened with high quality infrastructure, play equipment and well-trained Anganwadi workers/teachers.
- Every Anganwadi must have a well-ventilated, well-designed, child-friendly and well-constructed building with an enriched learning Funds for this programme will be provided by the Central and State governments.
- ECCE teacher trainings should be added as a skill gap in the list of National Skill Development Corporation to ensure that easy investment is available to produce efficient ECCE teachers.
- Universal access to quality early childhood education is perhaps the best investment that India can make for our children's and our nation's future.
- ECCE can also be introduced in Ashrams shalas in tribal-dominated areas in a phased manner.

DAILY QUIZ

Q1. With reference to RBI's Prompt Corrective Action (PCA), consider the following statements:

1. The Reserve Bank of India initiated the Scheme of Prompt Corrective Action (PCA) in 2002 to discipline banks when they report poor and risky financial performance.
2. The framework was reviewed in 2017 based on the recommendations of the Working Group on Restructuring Weak Public Sector Banks.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a. 1 only b. 2 only c. Both 1 and 2 d. Neither 1 nor 2

Q2. Sudarshan Sen committee was in news recently, is related to:

- a. Doubling the farmers income
- b. Biodiversity conservation
- c. Asset reconstruction companies
- d. Special economic zones

Q3. Consider the following statements about the One Sun, One World, One Grid initiative:

1. It has been awarded best green initiative of the year 2021 by United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).
2. It was created in 2015 and its secretariat is hosted by India.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a. 1 only b. 2 only c. Both 1 and 2 d. Neither 1 nor 2

Q4. Consider the following statements about the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI):

1. It is a platform where knowledge is generated and exchanged on different aspects of disaster and climate resilience of infrastructure.
2. It is the only international collaboration set up by India in the climate change sphere.

Which of the following statements given above is/are correct?

- a. 1 only b. 2 only c. Both 1 and 2 d. Neither 1 nor 2

Q5. Consider the following statements about the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC):

1. It is headed by the Defence Minister.
2. It clears all acquisitions, which includes both imported and those produced indigenously or under a foreign license.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2