

INTERNATIONAL RELATION**Pakistan-China Relationship & India**

Recently, the Government was questioned in Parliament on the pretext of foreign policy. The opposition has criticised the current policies as responsible for bringing Pakistan and China together. In response, the External Affairs Minister has asserted that the two countries were always close and shared a rich history of cooperation on many fronts.

What is the Background of the Pakistan-China Relationship?

- Initially, Pakistan was a member of two United States-led anti-communist military pacts, SEATO and CENTO, it was seen as part of the non-Soviet bloc - and China, under Mao Zedong, was on the other side of the aisle.
 1. On the other hand, India had a working relationship with China. The two countries had the same anti-colonial, non-aligned approach and they together gave the policy of Panchsheel.
 2. However, this relationship quickly changed due to the war between India and China in 1962.
- **1962 War:** The India-China war of 1962 led to China developing closer ties with Pakistan.
 1. In a boundary agreement in 1963, Pakistan ceded the Shaksgam Valley to China.
 2. The Shaksgam Valley or the Trans Karakoram Tract is part of the Hunza-Gilgit region of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and is a territory claimed by India but controlled by Pakistan.
 3. The agreement laid the foundation of the Karakoram highway, built jointly by China and Pakistan in the 1970s.
- **1965 War:** Pakistan got support from China diplomatically in the 1965 India-Pakistan war. In fact, analysts say that Pakistan was emboldened into aggression after India's defeat against China in 1962.
- **US-China & Pakistan:** The real diplomatic bonhomie began in the 1970s when Pakistan facilitated the outreach between the US-led by Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger and China's Mao and Zhou Enlai.
- **Nuclear Cooperation:** The relationship between China and Pakistan developed over the 1970s and '80s. Nuclear cooperation was one of the key pillars, especially after India tested its nuclear device in 1974.
 1. China has played a significant role in helping Pakistan develop its nuclear energy technology.
 2. In September 1986, they signed an agreement to facilitate the transfer of civil nuclear technology.
 3. In 1991, China agreed to supply Pakistan with its indigenously developed Qinshan-1 nuclear power plant.
 4. After India tested its nuclear device in 1998, Pakistan followed suit —largely due to help from China.

What is the History of India-China ties?

- The 1988 rapprochement between India and China with Rajiv Gandhi's visit became a watershed moment.
- There was a clear shift for China, where it saw ties with India from an economic lens and focused on trade, while separately talking to India on the border dispute. From that point onwards China followed a cautious approach vis a vis India and Pakistan.
- During the Kargil conflict of 1999, China advised Pakistan that they should withdraw troops and exercise self-control.
- China adopted a similarly cautious approach after the Parliament attack in 2002, the Operation Parakram buildup, as well as the Mumbai terror attack in 2008.
- This was also visible in the way China responded when the Balakot air strikes took place after the Pulwama attack in February 2019.

What is the Present Status of the India-China-Pakistan Triangle?

- The US-India closeness started by the nuclear deal in 2005-06 left both China and Pakistan worried.
- China's Belt and Road Initiative has manifested in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) which passes through the disputed territory claimed by India.
 1. From China's perspective, it offers access to the western Indian Ocean through the Gwadar port in Balochistan.

2. However, from India's perspective, the Gwadar port is a part of the String of Pearls Strategy, for the encirclement of India.
- India's August 2019 move to abrogate Article 370 and revoke the special status of Jammu and Kashmir has brought China and Pakistan even closer.
 - In 2020, China signed a defence pact with Pakistan to enhance defence cooperation between the Pakistan Army and the People's Liberation Army. Pakistan has procured Chinese-made combat drones or unmanned combat aerial vehicles.
 - Pakistan endorses China's position on its core issues including the South China Sea, Taiwan, Xinjiang, and Tibet.
 - After the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan, China has now sensed an opportunity to get into Afghanistan for influence and resources with help from Pakistan.

What are the Implications of China-Pakistan Closeness For India?

- **Two Front War:** Convergence between the two countries raises the real specter of a 'two-front' war.
- **Negotiation of Lost Territory:** China now looks to negotiate to 'recover' Indian territories that it claims namely, Aksai Chin, Ladakh, Jammu and Kashmir, Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim. It also positions China to play a role in Kashmir and the region.
- **China's Rise to Global Power Status:** China and Pakistan both share a common objective to prevent India's rise. With China's rise as a global power, India views its partnership with Pakistan as a greater concern than before.

Way Forward

- **Improving Relations in South Asian Neighbourhood:** To begin with, India should do well to improve relations with its neighbours. It should not be caught in an unfriendly neighbourhood given how China and Pakistan will attempt to contain and constrain India in the region.
- **Improving Relations in Extended Neighborhood:** The government's current engagement of the key powers in West Asia. It should be further strengthened in order to ensure energy security, increase maritime cooperation and enhance goodwill in the extended neighbourhood.
- **Improving Relations With Russia:** India must also ensure that its relationship with Russia is not sacrificed in favour of India-United States relations given that Russia could play a key role in defusing the severity of a regional gang up against India.
- **Improving Condition in Kashmir:** From a long-view perspective, a political outreach to Kashmir aimed at pacifying the aggrieved citizens there would go a long way towards that end.
- **Improving Indo-Pacific Strategy:** For India, the Indo-Pacific strategy involving the US, Australia, Japan and European partners is a key bulwark against the axis.

GOVERNMENT

Common Electoral Roll and Simultaneous Elections

Recently, the Law and Justice Minister told the Rajya Sabha that the Centre was not planning on amending the Representation of the People Act, 1951 to enable a common electoral roll and simultaneous elections to all electoral bodies in the country.

What is the Common Electoral Roll?

About:

- Under the Common Electoral Roll, only one voter list will be used for Lok Sabha, Vidhan Sabha and other elections.

Types of Electoral Rolls in India Currently:

- Some state laws allow the SEC (State Election Commission) to borrow and use the Election Commission of India's voter's rolls for the local body elections.
- In others, the state commission uses the EC's voters list as the basis for the preparation and revision of rolls for municipality and panchayat elections.
- Few states have their own electoral rolls and do not adopt EC's roll for local body polls like those of Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Odisha, Assam, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala, Odisha, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland and the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.
- The distinction stems from the fact that the supervision and conduct of elections in our country are entrusted with two constitutional authorities — the Election Commission (EC) of India and the State Election Commissions (SECs).

- **Election Commission (EC) of India:** It was set up in 1950, the EC is charged with the responsibility of conducting polls to:
 1. the offices of the President and Vice-President of India,
 2. to Parliament, the state assemblies and the legislative councils.
- **State Election Commissions (SECs):** The SECs, on the other hand, supervise municipal and panchayat elections. They are free to prepare their own electoral rolls for local body elections, and this exercise does not have to be coordinated with the EC.

Need:

- A common electoral roll and simultaneous elections as a way to save an enormous amount of effort and expenditure. It is argued that the preparation of a separate voters list causes duplication of the effort and the expenditure.
- **Earlier Recommendations:**
 1. The Law Commission recommended it in its 255th report in 2015 for a single electoral roll.
 2. The EC too adopted a similar stance in 1999 and 2004. The EC pointed out that it adds to the confusion among voters, since they may find their names present in one roll, but absent in another.

Implementation Process:

- A Constitutional Amendment to Articles 243K and 243ZA is required.
 1. Articles 243K and 243ZA deal with elections to panchayats and municipalities in the states. These give the power of superintendence, direction and control of preparation of electoral rolls and the conduct of these elections to the State Election Commission (SEC).
 2. The amendment would make it mandatory to have a single electoral roll for all elections in the country.
- Persuading the state governments to tweak their respective laws and adopt the Election Commission's (EC) voters list for municipal and panchayat polls.

Challenges:

- The boundaries of the EC's polling station may not necessarily match that of the wards.
- The change would require a massive consensus-building exercise.

What are Simultaneous Elections?

About:

- The idea is about structuring the Indian election cycle in a manner so that elections to the Lok Sabha and the State Assemblies are synchronised together so that the election to both can be held within a given span of time.

Advantages:

- Help keep a check on the poll expenses, party expenses, etc. and also save public money.
- Reduce the burden on administrative setup and security forces.
- Ensure timely implementation of the government policies and also ensure that the administrative machinery is engaged in developmental activities rather than electioneering.
- Solve the problem of governance on the part of the politicians who are ruling. It is generally seen that for short term political gains from a particular assembly election, ruling politicians avoid taking a harsh long term decision which can ultimately help the country in the long run.
- Provide more time to all the stakeholders i.e. political parties, Election Commission of India (ECI), paramilitary forces, civilians for the preparation of elections once in five years.

Challenges:

- The synchronisation is a major problem considering the traditions and conventions that India's Parliamentary system follows. The government is accountable to the Lower House and it is possible that the government can fall before completing its term and the moment the government falls, there has to be an election.
- It is difficult to convince and bring together all the political parties on the idea.
- For holding simultaneous elections, the requirements for Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and the Voter Verified Paper Audit Trails (VVPATs) will double as the ECI has to provide two sets (one for election to the Legislative Assembly and second for that to the Lok Sabha).
- There will also be an additional requirement of the polling staff and for better security arrangements.

Way Forward

Elections are held at different places every few months and it hampers the developmental work. Therefore, it's a must to have a deep study and deliberation on the idea in order to prevent the impact of the model code of conduct on development works every few months.

There needs to be a consensus on whether the country needs one nation, one poll or not. All political parties should at least cooperate in debating this issue, once the debate starts, the public opinion can be taken into consideration. India being a mature democracy, can then follow the outcome of the debate.

BIODIVERSITY & ENVIRONMENT**World Wetlands Day and Two New Ramsar Sites**

Recently, World Wetlands Day was celebrated on the 2nd of February 2022 across the globe. On the occasion, "National Wetland Decadal Change Atlas" was prepared by the Space Applications Center (SAC - one of the major centers of ISRO). The original Atlas was released by SAC in 2011 and has over the years been used extensively by all the State Governments also in their planning processes.

- Two new Ramsar sites (Wetlands of International Importance), Khijadia Wildlife Sanctuary in Gujarat and Bakhira Wildlife Sanctuary in UP were also announced on the occasion.

Why is The Day Celebrated on 2nd February ?

- This day marks the date of the adoption of the Convention on Wetlands on 2nd February 1971 in the Iranian city of Ramsar.
 1. The Ramsar Convention is an intergovernmental treaty that provides the framework for national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources.
 2. The countries with the most Ramsar Sites are the United Kingdom (175) and Mexico (142), as per the Ramsar List. Bolivia has the largest area with 148,000 sq km under the Convention protection.
- It was first celebrated in 1997.
- Theme for 2022: Wetlands Action for People and Nature.

What is a Wetland and its Significance ?**Wetlands:**

- Wetlands are ecosystems saturated with water, either seasonally or permanently. They include mangroves, marshes, rivers, lakes, deltas, floodplains and flooded forests, rice-fields, coral reefs, marine areas no deeper than 6 meters at low tide, as well as human-made wetlands such as waste-water treatment ponds and reservoirs.

Significance:

- Wetlands are a critical part of our natural environment. They mitigate floods, protect coastlines and build community resilience to disasters, reduce the impacts of floods, absorb pollutants and improve water quality.
- Wetlands are critical to human and planet life. More than 1 billion people depend on them for a living and 40% of the world's species live and breed in wetlands.
- They are a vital source for food, raw materials, genetic resources for medicines, and hydropower.
- 30% of land-based carbon is stored in peatland.
- They play an important role in transport, tourism and the cultural and spiritual well-being of people.
- Many wetlands are areas of natural beauty and many are important to Aboriginal people.

What are the Threats related to Wetlands ?

- As per the IPBES (Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services)'s global assessment, wetlands are the most threatened ecosystem.
- Wetlands are disappearing 3 times faster than forests due to human activities and global warming.
- According to UNESCO, the threat to wetlands will have an adverse impact on 40% of the world's flora and fauna that live or breed in wetlands.
- Major threats: Agriculture, development, pollution and climate change.

What is the status of Wetlands in India ?

- India has a network of 49 Ramsar sites covering an area of 10,93,636 hectares, the highest in South Asia. Bakhira Wildlife Sanctuary in UP provides a safe wintering and staging ground for

a large number of species of the Central Asian Flyway while Khijadia Wildlife Sanctuary (Gujarat) is a coastal wetland with rich avifaunal diversity providing a safe habitat to endangered and vulnerable species.

- In India, according to the National Wetland Inventory and Assessment compiled by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), wetlands are 4.63% of the total geographical area of the country.
 1. India has 19 types of wetlands.
 2. In state-wise distribution of wetlands, Gujarat is at the top (17.56% of total geographical area of the state or 22.7% of total wetlands areas of the country thanks to a long coastline.
 3. It is followed by Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal.

What is the Significance of Ramsar Listing ?

- It is like an ISO certification. They can take it off the list as well if it doesn't meet their standards continuously. It's a feather in the cap but there is a cost to it and that cost can be paid only if there is brand value.
- Ramsar tag makes it incumbent upon authority to strengthen the protection regime there and also creates defenses against encroachment.
- A number of species of birds prefer to avoid the Himalaya and instead choose the route passing through Afghanistan and Pakistan to enter the Indian sub-continent via Gujarat and Rajasthan. Thus, Gujarat becomes the first landing point of many international migratory species of ducks, waders, plovers, terns, gulls etc and shorebirds as well as birds of prey.
- Wetlands in India act as foraging and resting grounds for the migratory birds during winter. According to Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), CAF (Central Asian Flyway), which includes 30 countries, covers at least 279 populations of 182 migratory waterbird species, including 29 globally threatened and near-threatened species, which breed, migrate and winter within the region.

PRELIMS FACT

100 Years of Chauri Chaura Incident

Recently, the Prime Minister paid tribute to the heroes of freedom struggle on completion of the hundred years of Chauri Chaura incident.

- Chauri Chaura is a town in Gorakhpur district of Uttar Pradesh.
- On 4th February, 1922, this town witnessed a violent incident - a large crowd of peasants set fire to a police station that killed 22 policemen. Due to this incident, Mahatma Gandhi called off the Non-Cooperation Movement (1920-22).

What is the Background of the Incident?

- On 1th August, 1920, Gandhiji had launched the Non-Cooperation Movement against the government. It involved using swadeshi and boycott of foreign goods, especially machine made cloth, and legal, educational and administrative institutions, "refusing to assist a ruler who misrules".
- In the winter of 1921-22, volunteers of the Congress and the Khilafat Movement were organized into a national volunteer corps.
 1. Khilafat Movement was a pan-Islamic force in India that arose in 1919 in an effort to salvage the Ottoman caliph as a symbol of unity among the Muslim community in India during the British raj.
 2. The Congress supported the movement and Mahatma Gandhi sought to conjoin it to the Non-Cooperation Movement.

What was the incidence of Chauri Chaura and the Aftermath reactions?

Chauri Chaura Incident:

- On 4th February, volunteers congregated in the town, and after the meeting, proceeded in a procession to the local police station, and to picket the nearby Mundera bazaar.
- The police fired into the crowd killing some people and injuring many volunteers.
- In retaliation, the crowd proceeded to set the police station on fire.
- Some of the policemen who tried to escape were caught and battered to death. A lot of police property, including weapons, was destroyed.

Reaction of the British:

- The British Raj prosecuted the accused aggressively.

- A sessions court quickly sentenced 172 of the 225 accused to death. However, ultimately, only 19 of those convicted were hanged.

Reaction of Mahatma Gandhi:

- He condemned the crime of the policemen's killing. The volunteer groups in nearby villages were disbanded, and a Chauri Chaura Support Fund was set up to demonstrate "genuine sympathy" and seek atonement.
- Gandhi decided to stop the Non-Cooperation Movement, which he saw as having been tainted by unforgivable violence.
- He bent the Congress Working Committee to his will, and on 12th February, 1922, the satyagraha (movement) was formally suspended. Gandhi on his part, justified himself on grounds of his unshakeable faith in non-violence.

Reaction of Other National Leaders:

- Jawaharlal Nehru and other leaders leading the Non-Cooperation movement were shocked that Gandhiji had stopped the struggle when the civil resistance had consolidated their position in the freedom movement.
- Other leaders like Motilal Nehru and CR Das recorded their dismay at Gandhi's decision and decided to establish the Swaraj Party.

What did the suspension of the Movement result into?

- The disillusionment resulting from the suspension of the Non-Cooperation Movement nudged many of the younger Indian nationalists towards the conclusion that India would not be able to throw off colonial rule through non-violence.
- It was from the ranks of these impatient patriots that some of India's most of the revolutionaries came into picture like Jogesh Chatterjee, Ramprasad Bismil, Sachin Sanyal, Ashfaqulla Khan, Jatin Das, Bhagat Singh, Bhagwati Charan Vohra, Masterda Surya Sen, and many others.
- Besides, sudden termination of the Non-Cooperation Movement disillusioned the Khilafat movement leaders that created a rift between Congress and the muslim leaders.

DAILY ANSWER WRITING PRACTICE

Qns. Cryptocurrencies are said to empower people on one hand but at the same time create regulatory hurdles on the other. In light of the statement discuss the pros and cons of banning cryptocurrencies. (250 Words)

Introduction

A cryptocurrency is a digital asset designed to work as a medium of exchange wherein individual coin ownership records are stored in a ledger existing in a form of a computerized database. It uses strong cryptography to secure transaction records, to control the creation of additional coins, and to verify the transfer of coin ownership. It typically does not exist in physical form (like paper money) and is typically not issued by a central authority.

Body

Pros of banning cryptocurrencies

- **Sovereign guarantee:** Cryptocurrencies pose risks to consumers. They do not have any sovereign guarantee and hence are not legal tender.
- **Market volatility:** Their speculative nature also makes them highly volatile. For instance, the value of Bitcoin fell from USD 20,000 in December 2017 to USD 3,800 in November 2018.
- **Risk in security:** A user loses access to their cryptocurrency if they lose their private key (unlike traditional digital banking accounts, this password cannot be reset).
- **Malware threats:** In some cases, these private keys are stored by technical service providers (cryptocurrency exchanges or wallets), which are prone to malware or hacking.
- **Money laundering.**

Issues Associated with Banning Decentralised Cryptocurrencies

- **Blanket Ban:** The intended ban is the essence of the Cryptocurrency and Regulation of Official Digital Currency Bill, 2021. It seeks to prohibit all private cryptocurrencies in India.
- However, categorising the cryptocurrencies as public (government-backed) or private (owned by an individual) is inaccurate as the cryptocurrencies are decentralised but not private.
- Decentralised cryptocurrencies such as bitcoin aren't or rather, can't be controlled by any entity, private or public.

- **Brain-Drain:** Ban of cryptocurrencies is most likely to result in an exodus of both talent and business from India, similar to what happened after the RBI's 2018 ban.
- Back then, blockchain experts moved to countries where crypto was regulated, such as Switzerland, Singapore, Estonia and the US. With a blanket ban, blockchain innovation, which has uses in governance, data economy and energy, will come to a halt in India.
- **Deprivation of Transformative Technology:** A ban will deprive India, its entrepreneurs and citizens of a transformative technology that is being rapidly adopted across the world, including by some of the largest enterprises such as Tesla and MasterCard.
- **An Unproductive Effort:** Banning as opposed to regulating will only create a parallel economy, encouraging illegitimate use, defeating the very purpose of the ban.
- A ban is infeasible as any person can purchase cryptocurrency over the internet.
- **Contradictory Policies:** Banning cryptocurrency is inconsistent with the Draft National Strategy on Blockchain, 2021 of the Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY), which hailed blockchain technology as transparent, secure and efficient technology that puts a layer of trust over the internet.

Way Forward

- **Regulation is the Solution:** Regulation is needed to prevent serious problems, to ensure that cryptocurrencies are not misused, and to protect unsuspecting investors from excessive market volatility and possible scams.
- The regulation needs to be clear, transparent, coherent and animated by a vision of what it seeks to achieve.
- **Clarity on Crypto-currency definition:** A legal and regulatory framework must first define crypto-currencies as securities or other financial instruments under the relevant national laws and identify the regulatory authority in charge.
- **Strong KYC Norms:** Instead of a complete prohibition on cryptocurrencies, the government shall rather regulate the trading of cryptocurrencies by including stringent KYC norms, reporting and taxability.
- **Ensuring Transparency:** Record keeping, inspections, independent audits, investor grievance redressal and dispute resolution may also be considered to address concerns around transparency, information availability and consumer protection.
- **Igniting the Entrepreneurial Wave:** Cryptocurrencies and Blockchain technology can reignite the entrepreneurial wave in India's start up ecosystem and create job opportunities across different levels, from blockchain developers to designers, project managers, business analysts, promoters and marketers.

Conclusion

India is currently on the cusp of the next phase of digital revolution and has the potential to channel its human capital, expertise and resources into this revolution, and emerge as one of the winners of this wave. All that is needed to do is to get the policymaking right. Blockchain and crypto assets will be an integral part of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, Indians shouldn't be made to simply bypass it.

DAILY QUIZ

Q1. Consider the following statements about the Pradhan Mantri Formalisation of Micro food processing Enterprises (PMFME) Scheme:

1. It was launched under the Aatmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan.
2. It is a centrally sponsored scheme.
3. It is for the Unorganized Sector on All India basis.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 2 and 3 only
- c. 1 and 3 only
- d. 1, 2 and 3

Q2. Consider the following statements:

1. The Election Commission of India can raise the expenditure limit for candidates contesting elections.
2. All candidates are required to submit their expenditure statement to the ECI within 90 days of the completion of the elections.

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

Q3. Consider the following statements about National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA):

- 1. It has been constituted under Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
- 2. It is set up under the Chairmanship of the Minister for Environment and Forests.
- 3. It lays down standards and guidelines for tiger conservation in the Tiger Reserves, apart from National Parks and Sanctuaries.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 2 and 3 only
- c. 1 and 3 only
- d. **1, 2 and 3**

Q4. In which one of the following States is Kuno National Park located?

- a. Andhra Pradesh
- b. **Madhya Pradesh**
- c. Uttara Pradesh
- d. Arunachal Pradesh

Q5. Article 348 of the Constitution of India was in news recently, is related to which of the following?

- a. Election expenditure limit for candidates contesting elections
- b. **Language to be used in the Supreme Court and in the High Courts**
- c. Disqualification of members on ground of defection
- d. Enforcement of decrees and orders of the Supreme Court



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