

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

❖ **Taiwan, China, and the US**

❖ **CONTEXT:** The Speaker of the United States House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi arrived in Taiwan for what she called a show of American solidarity with the island, defying repeated warnings from Beijing and fueling a new round of US-China tensions. This visit took place at a time when US-China relations are the poorest in decades. In a phone call with President, President Xi Jinping had warned the US against any unilateral moves that would change the island status. China views Pelosi's visit as a serious violation of the "One China" principle and the provisions of the three China-US joint communiqués. This, according to the Beijing, gravely undermines peace and stability in the region, and sends a wrong signal to the "separatist forces for Taiwan independence".

❖ **What is One China Principle and One China Policy?**

- It is important to distinguish between the One China Principle (yige zhongguo yuanze) and the One China Policy (yi zhong zhengce) to understand the cross-Taiwan Strait problems. The PRC follows the One China Principle, a core belief that sees Taiwan as an inalienable part of China, with its sole legitimate government in Beijing. The US acknowledges this position but not necessarily its validity.
- The US instead follows the One China Policy — meaning that the PRC was and is the only China, with no recognition for the Republic of China (ROC, Taiwan) as a separate sovereign entity. At the same time, the US refuses to give in to the PRC's demands to recognise Chinese sovereignty over Taiwan — it only acknowledges the Chinese position that Taiwan is a part of China.
- The US has stuck to this position ever since — and used the "strategic ambiguity" that it creates to maintain the status quo and preserve stability in the Taiwan Strait.

❖ **What is the genesis of the China-Taiwan tensions?**

- The ROC was founded in 1912 following the collapse of the Qing dynasty and the 1911 Revolution. Dr Sun Yat-sen who assumed the presidency of the ROC, was soon succeeded by Yuan Shikai. Taiwan was at the time under Japanese colonial rule, having been ceded by the Qing following the 1895 Treaty of Shimonoseki. After the defeat of Japan in World War II, the ROC government began exercising jurisdiction over Taiwan in 1945.
- After the communists won the civil war on the mainland, Mao Zedong proclaimed the founding of the People's Republic with its capital in Beijing on October 1, 1949. That December, after the PLA advanced into Sichuan province, Chiang Kai-shek, one of Sun Yat-sen's lieutenants, retreated to the island of Taiwan along with some 2 million nationalist soldiers.
- The ROC has exercised effective jurisdiction over the main island and several outlying islands ever since, leaving Taiwan and China under the rule of different governments. The Taiwan Strait is only 130 km at its shortest distance, and the mainland city of Xiamen in Fujian is only 2 km from the Taiwanese-controlled island of Kinmen.
- Until the 1970s, the US and most Western governments recognised the ROC as the government of all of China. The US and PRC established diplomatic relations on January 1, 1979, almost thirty years after the communists came to power. There have been three instances of disturbances in the Taiwan Strait in 1954, 1958, and 1995-96, but peace has largely been maintained due to American "strategic ambiguity".

❖ **So what has changed now? How did we get here?**

Domestic policy aspects of all three countries — Taiwan, China, and the US — have contributed to today's situation.

- **CHINA:** In 2015, China initiated path-breaking military reforms to convert the PLA into a world-class force by 2049. One of China's stated national security objectives has been "reunification with Taiwan". In his Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Centenary speech in 2021, President Xi said, "Resolving the Taiwan question and realising China's complete reunification is a historic mission and an unshakable commitment of the Communist Party of China."

Since September 2020, China has routinely sent aircraft into Taiwan's air defence identification zone (ADIZ). Meanwhile, between 2018 and 2020, Xi dropped the word "peaceful" while referring to reunification with Taiwan, underlining his aggressive approach to territorial disputes everywhere.

- **TAIWAN:** In 2016, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) candidate Tsai Ing-wen was elected President. On December 2 2016, she initiated a telephonic conversation with then US President elect Donald Trump — the first time since 1979 that the two countries spoke at that level.

Under the Tsai administration, US-Taiwan relations warmed. In March 2018, Trump signed into law the Taiwan Travel Act, which allowed American officials to step up exchanges with Taiwan. Over the last six years, the US has approved multiple sales of arms to Taiwan — including 108 M1A2T Abrams tanks, Hercules armoured vehicles, heavy equipment transporters, rocket launchers, sensors, artillery and, most importantly, 66 F-16 Viper fighter jets.

China views all of this as US attempts to use Taiwan to contain the PRC's "peaceful rise", emboldening "Taiwan's pro-independence separatist activities", and "impacting cross-strait harmony."

- **UNITED STATES:** Taiwan is just one aspect of the worsening geopolitical checkerboard between the US and China. Antagonistic stances on security, economics, technology, and ideology have crystallised under the Biden Administration, with limited room for adjustment. The US has carried out a diplomatic boycott of the Beijing Winter Olympics, added more Chinese companies to its trade restriction list, and Congress has passed a bill to counter China's human rights abuses in Xinjiang.

The Trump Administration had opened a more confrontational era in relations with China, and Biden has concretised this approach by signing the AUKUS trilateral security pact with the UK and Australia, and increasing Quad coordination with Japan, India, and Australia to limit Beijing's influence in the Indo-Pacific region.

Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, there was concern in Western capitals over whether China could carry out similar action in Taiwan. Against this background, Speaker Pelosi's trip to Taiwan has led some security scholars to predict a fourth Taiwan Strait Crisis.

❖ **What have been the reactions to Pelosi's visit in China and Taiwan?**

- China has imposed restrictions on the import of Taiwanese food brands, and has announced military exercises in areas surrounding Taiwan between August 4 and 7. The PLA's Eastern Theatre Command, which is responsible for contingencies against Taiwan, has said that these exercises will include joint maritime-aerial drills in the north, south west and south east of Taiwan, long-range firing in the Taiwan Strait, and conventional missile firing in waters east of Taiwan.
- Before Pelosi's arrival, major Taiwanese government websites, including the President's official website, went dark due to an alleged distributed denial-of-service attack. Hours after Pelosi, 27 Chinese warplanes entered Taiwan's air defence zone.
- Taiwanese lawmakers cutting across party lines, including the DPP and Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT), have welcomed Pelosi's visit as a high point in US-Taiwan relations. However, some academics have criticised the visit as being reckless, and resulting in needless escalation of tensions in the Taiwan Strait. Taiwan should not be a chip on the table in the great game of the US-China conflict, they argue.

❖ **Where do we go from here?**

- This is a case of China trying to deter Taiwan by using punishment and Taiwan and the US pushing back against Chinese aggression using denial techniques. China is likely to make sure that it punishes Taiwan to the extent that visits such as Pelosi's are deterred in the future. This might include economic measures, limited military measures for signalling, select diplomatic measures across bilateral and multilateral forums, and offensive cyber coercion.
- In response, Taiwan and the US will likely continue to build denial defensive capabilities so that China's aggression is not encouraged. The US will also continue signalling its increasing presence and resolve in the region by conducting freedom of navigation operations (FONOPs) in the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea, but at the same time, keep lines of communication open with china to avoid unintended escalations.

POLITY

❖ **Understanding the provisions for foreign visits of State government Ministers**

- ❖ **CONTEXT:** Delhi Lieutenant-Governor (LG) Vinai Kumar Saxena recently advised Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal against attending the World Cities Summit in Singapore as it was for "mayors of cities". Now, State Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot — who had also sought political clearance for an official visit to London — has moved the Delhi High Court with a plea to set aside the need for travel clearances by the Centre for private foreign visits of State government Ministers. He has also asked for the framing of appropriate guidelines with respect to the clearances for official foreign tours of Chief Ministers and other State government members.

❖ **When did Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal seek approval for Singapore visit?**

- According to the petition, on April 5, the Chief Minister received an invitation from the Minister in the Prime Minister's Office and Second Minister of Finance and Development Singapore, to participate in the World Cities Summit scheduled from July 31 to August 3.
- The State government's Deputy Security (Protocol), through a letter dated June 3, requested that all necessary clearances and arrangements for the visit be made. On June 7, the file was submitted for sign-off to the LG office. On June 3, the petitioner had applied for political clearance for his official visit to London from June 12 to 19.
- Additionally, the petition also mentioned another instance wherein political clearance for the Delhi Chief Minister's proposed visit to Copenhagen for attending the 7th C-40 World Mayors Summit in October 2019 was rejected by the MEA "without providing any reasons".

❖ **Under which provisions are approvals required?**

- On August 16, 1982, the Cabinet Secretariat had issued an office memorandum titled “Guidelines regarding foreign travel of Ministers of State government and Union Territories and State government officials”, stating that foreign visits by members of the State governments in their official capacity would require clearances from the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Ministry of Home Affairs, Finance Ministry, and the Central Administrative Ministry. It issued another order on March 30, 1995, reiterating the same.
- The Secretariat circulated another order on September 3, 2004, modifying the provisions to the extent that the final orders were to be issued by the Finance Ministry. The following directive dated November 2, 2004, stipulated that Chief Ministers required further approval from the Prime Minister’s Office before an official visit. On August 26, 2010, yet another office memorandum made political clearances mandatory before private visits of Ministers in State governments, which was reiterated through an order on May 6, 2015.
- The petition seeks a quashing of the 2010 and 2015 office memoranda which require State government Ministers to ask for political clearances for personal visits abroad.
- ❖ **What followed after the approvals were sought?**
- As no decision on his application was received from the MEA, the petitioner wrote to the Ministry on June 27 raising concerns. He also sought data on the number of such clearances rejected in the past five years. Another letter was sent on July 4, asking for the statutory and constitutional grounds for denial of travel clearances.
- Since the LG office had not yet responded on the Singapore visit, the Chief Minister on July 17 wrote a letter addressed to the Prime Minister requesting expedited clearances for the Singapore visit.
- On July 20, the LG wrote back stating that the visit to Singapore was “not advisable”, pointing out that it was primarily attended by mayoral heads and that, in any case, urban governance in Delhi was not the exclusive domain of the State government.
- The next day, the State government requested political clearance from the Centre directly. However, no communication on the decision has yet been received from the relevant Central government authorities.
- ❖ **On what grounds has the petition been filed?**
- The petition argues that the need for political clearances from the MEA for personal foreign visits of State government Ministers violates their right to privacy and dignity of their constitutional office; that the “undated” LG letter advising against the proposed Singapore visit is beyond the jurisdiction of his office’s authority; that the use of “gross delay” to effectively deny clearances for official foreign visits, including the Chief Minister’s Singapore visit, is an “arbitrary non-exercise of power”; and that the manner of implementation of the relevant office memoranda on clearances for official visits “suffer from the vice of arbitrariness and un-channeled discretion”.
- It also states that the “arbitrary and capricious implementation” of the travel clearance Office Memoranda is against national interest and good governance, and impinges upon the right to travel abroad as guaranteed under Article 21.

PRELIMS

1. 10 more Indian wetlands sites get Ramsar tag

- ❖ **CONTEXT: International importance, taking the number of such sites to 64, The 10 new Ramsar sites include six in Tamil Nadu and one each in Goa, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha.**
- India and China now have the most number of wetlands of international importance with 10 more Indian sites entering the Ramsar list, taking the total to 64.
- The Ramsar list aims at "developing and maintaining an international network of wetlands, which are important for the conservation of global biological diversity and for sustaining human life, through the maintenance of their ecosystem components, processes and benefits".
- The 10 new sites- six in Tamil Nadu and one each in Goa, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and Odisha- cover an area of 12,50,361 hectares in the country.
- "Designation of these sites would help in conservation and management of wetlands and wise use of their resources. Now, India stands at first position jointly with China.
- The new Indian wetlands which have bagged the coveted tag are
- Koonthankulam Bird Sanctuary, Gulf of Mannar Marine Biosphere Reserve, Vembannur Wetland Complex, Vellode Bird Sanctuary, Vedanthangal Bird Sanctuary and Udhayamarthandapuram Bird Sanctuary in Tamil Nadu , Satkosia Gorge in Odisha , Nanda Lake in Goa , Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary in Karnataka , Sirpur Wetland in Madhya Pradesh.
- India is aiming at getting a Ramsar tag for 75 of its wetlands on the 75th year of Independence.

2. Anaemia Mukht Bharat

- ❖ **CONTEXT: The Government of India implements Anaemia Mukht Bharat (AMB) strategy under POSHAN Abhiyaan to reduce the prevalence of Anaemia in the country.**

❖ **Anaemia**

- It is a condition in which the number of red blood cells is insufficient to meet the body's physiological requirements, which vary by age, sex, altitude, smoking habits, and during pregnancy.
- The manifestations of anemia include fatigue, weakness, dizziness and drowsiness to impaired cognitive development of children and increased morbidity.
- Anaemia in pregnancy is associated with post-partum haemorrhage, neural tube defects, low birth weight, premature births, stillbirths and maternal deaths.
- Deficiencies which cause Anaemia include Iron, Vitamin B12, Folate, Vitamin A.
- According to the National Family Health Survey 4 (NFHS-4) Anemic prevalence across all ages is extremely high in India varying from 30% to 69%.
- As per NFHS-5 (2019-21) prevalence of anaemia is 25% in men, 57% in women, 31.1% in adolescent boys, 59.1% in adolescent girls, 52.2% in pregnant women and 67.1% in children (6-59 months).
- The reduction of anemia is one of the important objectives of the POSHAN Abhiyaan or National Nutrition Mission.

❖ **Various interventions under the Anaemia Mukh Bharat programme**

- In 2018, the Government of India launched the Anaemia Mukh Bharat (AMB) strategy to reduce anaemia by 3% points per year in the vulnerable age groups such as women, children and adolescents.
- **Various interventions** - Prophylactic Iron and Folic Acid Supplementation in all six target age groups.
- Intensified year-round Behaviour Change Communication (BCC) Campaign for
 - Improving compliance to Iron Folic Acid supplementation and deworming
 - Enhancing appropriate infant and young child feeding practices
 - Encouraging increase in intake of iron-rich food through diet diversity/ quantity/ frequency and/or fortified foods with focus on harnessing locally available resources
 - Ensuring delayed cord clamping after delivery (by 3 minutes) in health facilities
- Testing and treatment of anaemia, using digital methods and point of care treatment, with special focus on pregnant women and school-going adolescents
- Addressing non-nutritional causes of anaemia in endemic pockets with special focus on malaria, hemoglobinopathies and fluorosis.
- Management of severe anaemia in pregnant women undertaken by administration of IV Iron Sucrose/Blood transfusion.
- Providing incentives to the ANM for identification and follow-up of pregnant women with severe anaemia in high priority districts (HPDs)
- Training and orientation of Medical Officers and front line-workers on newer Maternal Health and Anaemia Mukh Bharat guidelines
- Field level awareness by ASHAs through community mobilization activities and IEC and BCC activities.
- Measures taken includes - working with other line departments and ministries for strengthening implementation
 - engaging National Centre of Excellence and Advanced Research on Anaemia Control (NCEAR-A) at AIIMS, Delhi in capacity building of health care providers
 - Strengthening supply chain and logistics.
 - Development of AMB Training Toolkit for capacity building of health care providers in anaemia management
 - Launch of Anaemia Mukh Bharat e-Training Modules to facilitate training of the health care providers through virtual platforms.

3. Cabinet nod for climate pledges

- India ratified pledges made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Glasgow in November 2021 to accelerate the country's reliance on renewable energy to power the economy and be effectively free from use of fossil fuels by 2070.
- The Union Cabinet, chaired by Mr. Modi, approved an update to India's Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC). Mr. Modi had laid out five commitments, or Panchamrit, as the government references it, namely:
 - India will increase its non-fossil energy capacity to 500 GW (gigawatt) by 2030;
 - will meet 50% of its energy requirements from "renewable energy" by 2030;
 - will reduce the total projected carbon emissions by one billion tonnes from now till 2030;
 - will reduce the carbon intensity of its economy by more than 45%;
 - will achieve the target of "net zero" by the year 2070, when there will be no net carbon dioxide emitted from energy sources.

- The Cabinet approval, only mentions two of these promises, namely that India is committed to reduce emissions intensity of its GDP by 45% by 2030, from the 2005 level and achieving 50% cumulative electric power installed capacity from non-fossil fuel-based energy resources by 2030.
- While the NDCs reflected India's commitment to sustainable development they were a climbdown from the ambition India had expressed at Glasgow.
- India's updated NDC does not include all the promises made at COP26 in Glasgow

ANSWER WRITING

Q. Customs and traditions suppress reason leading to obscurantism. Do you agree?

Customs are traditional and widely accepted course to behave or do something that is clearly defined to a particular society, whereas traditions are about the transmission of these customs or beliefs from generation to generation. The fact is that they have to be passed on in this manner. Unless customs are followed and practiced with lots of self-control and discipline, they can't be passed on from one generation to another as unique cultural traditions specific to their society. This means it is limited, or in fact, no scope for change.

How the customs/traditions suppress rationality

We encounter frequently these traditions in our daily lives, starting from the harmless ones to the most brutal and inhumane customs. Some of the them that prevail in India are as follows:

- Made Snana is a ritual where devotees roll over leftover food by Brahmins to cure skin diseases, marriage problems and infertility. It is conducted during three-day annual celebration outside Kukke Subramanya temple in Dakshina Kannada district between November-December. It is also practiced in parts of Tamil Nadu.
- FGM is the name given to procedures that involve altering or injuring the female genitalia for non-medical or cultural reasons, and is recognized internationally as a violation of human rights and the health and integrity of girls and women. It is one of the most brutal ritual that is practiced in various countries including India among the Dawoodi Bohra community.
- Self-flagellation is a ritual of religious significance done in the name of atonement of one's sins is practised widely even today and the people engaging themselves into the act confess that they do not experience any sort of pain as they are in a religious trance. It is a ritual involving hitting oneself with a whip or whips of chains with attached blades. Practised among the Christian communities in the Phillipines and Mexico on Good Friday and among the Shi'a sect of Islam in countries like India, Pakistan, Iraq and Lebanon during the month of Muharram.
- The Devadasi is a Sanskrit term which means servant of Deva (GOD) or Devi (GODESS). This is a kind of religious practice carried on basically in the southern part of India in which a girl in her pre puberty period was dedicated to worship and service of deity or a temple for the rest of her life by her parents.

How it leads to obscurantism?

- Often these traditions are justified using either pseudo-science or interpretation of religious texts. For example, triple talaq and nikah halala have been defended irrationally by quoting various texts. In Sabarimala case, despite the ban on the entry of women is against the Right to Equality as ensured in the Constitution, has been also defended.
- Since the change in these customs is not welcomed at all, these justifications even suppress the reason of the greatest importance. Sometimes they stand so rigid that a reason looks completely helpless and further leads to obscurantism.
- These obscurantisms protect the customs and traditions from reason, evolution of human and dynamic social order.
- Communal politics, lack of spirit of rationality, lack of education, etc. further aggravate the situation.

Conclusion: In a democratic polity, whenever there is a conflict between reason and customs, state apparatus esp. judiciary has the task to strengthen the idea of rationality. But, in many cases, state too struggles in doing so. This is the reason that despite the Constitution in Article 51A (h) directs state to develop the scientific temper, humanism and the spirit of inquiry and reform among the citizens, still the situation is far from the desired result. Customs and traditions need to make people the rational beings taking account of reasons, rather than becoming a reason for obscurantism, ignorance and faithlessness.

MCQs

1. Consider the following statements
 1. It is a condition in which the number of red blood cells is insufficient to meet the body's physiological requirements
 2. In India anaemia is most prevalent among children (6-59 months) nearly 67%
 3. In India anaemia is caused mostly by deficiency of Vitamin B12

Choose the correct statement using the codes given below

a) 1 and 2 only b) 2 and 3 only c) 1 and 3 only d) All of the above

2. Consider the following pairs
 1. Satkosia Gorge – Odisha
 2. Koonthankulam Bird Sanctuary - Tamil Nadu
 3. Udhayamarthandapuram Bird Sanctuary - Andhra Pradesh
 4. Ranganathittu Bird - Sanctuary in Karnataka
 How many above pairs is /are incorrectly matched?
 a) Only two pairs **b) Only one pair** c) Only three pairs d) All the four pairs
3. Which of the following is not the commitment of India as Panchmrit in Glasgow?
 - a) India will increase its non-fossil energy capacity to 500 GW (gigawatt) by 2030
 - b) India will meet 50% of its energy requirements from “renewable energy” by 2030
 - c) India will reduce the carbon intensity of its economy by more than 45%
 - d) India will achieve the target of “net zero carbon emission” by the year 2045.**
4. The Incheon commitment/strategy 2013-2022 refers to which of the following statements?
 - a) Better relationship of India with South Korea.
 - b) Empowerment of disabled persons.**
 - c) Sustainable Development of Indian Ocean region.
 - d) Higher education development in India.
5. With reference to Marburg virus, consider the following statements:
 1. Fruit bats of the Pteropodidae family, are considered to be natural hosts of Marburg virus.
 2. There is treatment to neutralize the virus, but a range of blood products and immune therapies are currently under development.
 3. The Marburg virus is transmitted to people from fruit bats and there is no possibility for human-to-human transmission.
 Which of the above statement(s) is/are correct?
 a) **1 and 2 only** b) 1 and 3 only c) 2 and 3 only d) 1, 2 and 3
6. The term Karakoram Anomaly often heard in news, refers to:
 - a) Growth of Karakoram Ranges
 - b) Decline in relative altitude of Himalayan ranges
 - c) Resistance to glacial melting in Karakoram ranges**
 - d) Absence of volcanoes in Karakoram ranges
7. The e-Utthaan project, recently seen in news, tells about:
 - a) Capturing online data based on funds allocated under Scheduled Caste Sub Plan (SCSP)**
 - b) Spending of funds related to Tribal sub plan
 - c) Database about the usage of Nirbhaya Fund
 - d) Centralized database about usage of funds in Compensatory Afforestation programme
8. Consider the following statements:
 1. GI tag for rose onion is given to the state of Maharashtra and GI tag for white onion is given to the state of Karnataka.
 2. Other GI tag products of the state of Maharashtra include Chiku, Keshar mango, and bananas.
 Which of the above statement(s) is/are correct?
 a) 1 only **b) 2 only** c) Both 1 and 2 d) Neither 1 nor 2
9. Consider the following statements
 1. The World Trade Organisation (WTO) led aid for trade flows is particularly meant for the Least Developed Economies.
 2. India had received the highest aid for trade in 2020 from the developed countries.
 Which of the above statement(s) is/are correct?
 a) 1 only b) 2 only **c) Both 1 and 2** d) Neither 1 nor 2
10. Consider the following statements:
 1. Bioluminescence is a chemical reaction that takes place inside a living organism and light is produced.
 2. Bioluminescence occurs when there is low wind speed and high atmospheric temperature.
 Which of the above statement(s) is/are correct?
 a) **1 only** b) 2 only c) Both 1 and 2 d) Neither 1 nor 2