

**INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**

❖ **India's NATO engagement**

❖ **CONTEXT: India held its first political dialogue with the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) in Brussels on December 12, 2019. The talks were attended by senior officials including from the Ministry of External Affairs and the Ministry of Defence. The meeting had not been announced by the Indian government so far**

❖ **What is NATO?**

- The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, or NATO, is a political and military alliance of 28 European countries and two countries in North America (United States and Canada).
- It was set up in 1949 by the US, Canada, and several western European nations to ensure their collective security against the Soviet Union. It was the US's first peacetime military alliance outside the western hemisphere.
- Thirty countries are currently members of NATO, which is headquartered in Brussels, Belgium. The headquarters of the Allied Command Operations is near Mons, also in Belgium.

❖ **What is important about NATO's collective defence?**

- Members of NATO are committed to mutual defence in response to an attack by any external party. Collective defence lies at the very heart of NATO, "a unique and enduring principle that binds its members together, committing them to protect each other and setting a spirit of solidarity within the Alliance".
- This is laid out in Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, the founding treaty of NATO.
- Article 5 reads: "The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all and consequently they agree that, if such an armed attack occurs, each of them, in exercise of the right of individual or collective self-defence recognized by Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations, will assist the Party or Parties so attacked by taking forthwith, individually and in concert with the other Parties, such action as it deems necessary, including the use of armed force, to restore and maintain the security of the North Atlantic area."

❖ **What are the origins of NATO?**

- At the end of WWII, as battered European nations started to rebuild their economies, the US, which believed that an economically strong, re-armed, and integrated Europe was critical to prevent the westward expansion of communist USSR, embarked on a programme to supply economic aid to the continent on a massive scale.
- The European Recovery Programme, known as the Marshall Plan after President Harry S Truman's Secretary of State George C Marshall, promoted the idea of shared interests and cooperation between the US and Europe. The USSR declined to participate in the Marshall Plan, and discouraged eastern European states in its sphere of influence from receiving American economic assistance.
- In the 1946-49 Greek Civil War, the US and UK worked to thwart the Soviet-backed communist takeover of Greece. The western nations threw their weight behind Turkey as it stood up to Soviet pressure over control of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles Strait (which connect the Black Sea and Sea of Marmara, and the Sea of Marmara and Aegean Sea, respectively) — and in 1947-48, the US committed itself to containing the communist uprisings in Turkey and Greece.
- In 1948, Stalin's government sponsored a coup in (erstwhile) Czechoslovakia, which led to the installation of a communist regime in a country sharing borders with both Soviet-controlled East Germany and the pro-West West Germany. In 1948-49, the Soviets blockaded West Berlin to force the US, UK, and France to give up their post-war jurisdictions in the country, leading to a major crisis and an 11-month airlift of supplies by Western countries to keep their part of the city going.
- All these events led the US to conclude that an American-European alliance against the USSR was necessary. The Europeans too were convinced of the need for a collective security solution, and in March 1948, the UK, France, Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg signed the Brussels Treaty of collective defence, which meant that if any of the signatories faced an attack, they would be defended by all the others.
- A few months later, the US Congress passed the Vandenburg Resolution, a landmark action "advising the President to seek US and free world security through support of mutual defence arrangements that operated within the UN Charter but outside the Security Council, where the Soviet veto would thwart collective defence arrangements".

- The Vandenberg Resolution was the stepping stone to NATO. The US believed the treaty would be more effective if it included, apart from the signatories of the Brussels Treaty, countries of the North Atlantic — Canada, Iceland, Denmark, Norway, Ireland, and Portugal. From the American perspective, these countries were the links between the two shores of the Atlantic Ocean, and could help facilitate military action if it was needed.
- The treaty was signed in Washington DC on April 4, 1949. It had 12 signatories initially: the US, UK, Canada, France, Denmark, Belgium, Norway, Portugal, the Netherlands, Italy, Iceland, and Luxembourg.
- ❖ **What is the significance of India's talks with NATO?**
- India's talks with NATO hold significance given that the North Atlantic alliance has been engaging both China and Pakistan in bilateral dialogue. There was a view here that given the role of China and Pakistan in New India's strategic imperatives, reaching out to NATO would add a key dimension to India's growing engagement with US and Europe.
- Until December 2019, NATO had held nine rounds of talks with China, and the Chinese Ambassador in Brussels and NATO's Deputy Secretary General engaged with each other every quarter. NATO had also been in political dialogue and military cooperation with Pakistan; it opened selective training for Pakistani officers and its military delegation visited Pakistan in November 2019 for military staff talks.
- The first round of dialogue was finalised for December 12, 2019 by the Indian mission in Brussels after it received a draft agenda for the meeting from NATO.
- Upon receipt of the draft agenda, an inter-ministerial meeting was convened with representatives from the External Affairs and Defence ministries, and the National Security Council Secretariat.
- The government was of the view that engaging NATO in a political dialogue would provide India an opportunity to bring about a balance in NATO's perceptions about the situation in regions and issues of concerns to India.
- ❖ **Was there any common ground?**
- There was a convergence in the perspectives of both India and NATO on China, terrorism, and Afghanistan, including Pakistan's role in Afghanistan.
- The first dialogue, it is learnt, revealed three critical issues on which India expected only limited common ground with NATO:
  - From NATO's perspective, it was not China, but Russia whose aggressive actions continued to be the main threat to Euro-Atlantic security, and that NATO had faced difficulties to convene meetings of NATO-Russia Council due to Russian refusal to place issues such as Ukraine and Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty on the agenda.
  - Given the divergence among NATO countries, its view on China was seen as mixed; while it did deliberate on China's rise, the conclusion was that China presented both a challenge and an opportunity.
  - In Afghanistan, NATO saw the Taliban as a political entity, which was not in line with India's stance. This was almost two years before the Taliban announced an interim government in Afghanistan in September 2021.
- However, the Indian side felt maritime security was a principal area of conversation in the future, given a substantial common ground with NATO.
- ❖ **India-NATO talks: Is there a common ground on China?**
- In its first round of talks with NATO, India realised it did not share a common ground with the grouping on Russia and the Taliban. With NATO's views on China also mixed, given the divergent views of its members, India's Quad membership is aimed at countering China.
- Otherwise, the alliance's engagement with China and Pakistan separately would leave it with lopsided perspectives on regional and global security matters of concern to India.
- ❖ **What are the next steps?**
- In NATO's view, India, given its geo-strategic position and unique perspectives on various issues, was relevant to international security and could be an important partner in informing the alliance about India's own region and beyond, sources said.
- It is learnt the two sides also discussed a possible second round in New Delhi in 2020, which was delayed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- As far as India is concerned, it was felt India may consider proposals emanating from NATO, if any, on bilateral cooperation in areas of interest to India, based on the progress achieved in the initial

rounds. While many say it is logical to follow up and formalise the talks, some caution because of sensitivities attached to the perception of NATO seen by some as expansionist in nature.

### PRELIMS

#### 1. Chronic Fatigue Syndrome

❖ **CONTEXT:** A woman from Bengaluru has filed a petition in the Delhi High Court to stop her Noida-based friend, who has been suffering from Chronic Fatigue Syndrome since 2014, from travelling to Europe to undergo a physician-assisted euthanasia. The petition stated that his condition has deteriorated over the past eight years, making him “completely bed-bound and just able to walk a few steps inside home”.

#### ❖ **The disease**

- Also known as myalgic encephalomyelitis (ME/CFS), Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, is a serious and debilitating disease that affects the nervous system, the immune system and the body’s production of energy, according to the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).
- Experts have suggested that the term can trivialize the severity of the illness. In a 2015 report, the US Institute of Medicine proposed the term systemic exertion intolerance disease (SEID).
- Its causes are still unknown. However, the potential triggers would include viral or bacterial infection, hormonal imbalances and genetic predispositions. There is no specific test for the disease, and doctors have to rely on medical examinations, blood and urine tests.
- ME/CFS can affect anyone, from children to adults of all ages. According to the CDC, it’s more common in women and people between 40 and 60 years old.

#### ❖ **Symptoms**

- The biggest telltale symptom is a significantly lowered ability to do activities that were performed before the illness. This is accompanied by at least 6 months (or longer) of debilitating fatigue that is more severe than everyday feelings of tiredness. This fatigue is not relieved by sleep or rest and exercising usually makes the symptoms worse, according to the UK’s National Health Services (NHS).
- Other symptoms include trouble sleeping, difficulty in thinking, memory retention and concentration, dizziness/light headedness, headaches, muscle pain, joint ache, flu-like symptoms, tender lymph nodes and digestive issues.
- According to the New York state health department, the most recognizable symptom is post-exertional malaise (PEM). Patients often describe it as a “crash” in physical/mental energy following even minor activities like grocery shopping or brushing teeth.

#### ❖ **Treatment**

- As of yet, there is no specific cure or approved treatment. Instead, doctors recommend ways to deal with the symptoms of the disease.
- To manage PEM, patients are recommended ‘pacing,’ in which patients learn to balance rest and activity to prevent crashes caused by exertion.
- The CDC earlier recommended cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT) and graded exercise therapy (GET), which uses physical activity as a treatment for ME/CFS. After concerns over their effectiveness and possibility of harm, the CDC stopped recommending these treatments, according to the New York state health department.

#### 2. National Beekeeping and Honey Mission (NBHM)

- The National Beekeeping and Honey Mission was announced by the Union Government as part of the Atma Nirbhar Bharat package in 2020.
- The scheme is implemented by the National Bee Board (NBB) and is approved for three years from 2020 to 2023.
- The scheme is aimed at the overall development and promotion of scientific beekeeping in India to achieve the objectives of the Sweet Revolution.
- The scheme is under the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers’ Welfare, GOI.
- It is a central sector scheme (100% central government funding).
- The scheme will work in tandem with the various other schemes related to beekeeping such as KVIC’s Honey Mission, Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH), and the ministries of rural development, MSME, AYUSH, commerce and industry, tribal affairs, etc.

#### ❖ **Objectives**

- Foster the holistic growth of the beekeeping industry for income & employment generation for farm and non-farm households.
- Augment horticulture/agriculture production.
- Develop infrastructural facilities including establishing Integrated Beekeeping Development Centre (IBDC)s/CoE, bee disease diagnostic labs, honey testing labs, custom hiring centres, nucleus stock, Api-therapy centres, bee breeders, etc.
- Empower women via beekeeping.
- Develop blockchain/traceability system for traceability of the source of honey & other beehive products; and employing IT tools in beekeeping, including online registration, etc.
- Create and enable honey corridors in potential areas.
- Encourage agri-entrepreneurs & agri-startups in beekeeping/honey production.
- Promote trade agreements between traders/exporters and beekeepers.
- Foster, develop and diffuse the latest and state-of-the-art technologies and skill development in the beekeeping industry for the production of honey & other high-value beehive products.
- Boost beekeepers through an institutional framework for a collective approach like SHGs, FPOs, etc.
- Magnify the economic, social and ecological benefits by diversification through beekeeping by producing a higher quantity & good quality of honey and other high-value beehive products such as beeswax, bee pollen, royal jelly, propolis, comb honey, bee venom, etc. for domestic and global markets.
- It also aims to make farmers aware about the
  1. Distribution of specialized Beekeeping equipments for producing high value products, viz. Royal Jelly, Bee Venom, Comb Honey, etc,
  2. Studies on exploring potential of High Altitude Honey, production of special honey in Kannauj & Hathras Districts of UP.
  3. Use of mustard honey to cure colon cancer.

Besides, NBHM has three sub-missions or sub-schemes, namely, Mini Mission – I, II and III.

- **Mini Mission I**
  - Here, the focus is on the production and productivity enhancement of different crops through pollination aided by adopting scientific beekeeping.
  - It aims to create awareness about scientific beekeeping. States will be assisted in the setting up of state bee boards/state beekeeping and honey missions.
- **Mini Mission II**
  - Here, the focus is on post-harvest management of beekeeping, beehive products, including collection, processing, storage, marketing, value addition, etc.
- **Mini Mission III**
  - Here, the focus is on the generation of research and technology for different states/regions and agro-climatic and socio-economic conditions.

### 3. Atal Pension Yojana

❖ **CONTEXT: Following a recent amendment by the Finance Ministry, Income-tax payers will not be eligible to join Atal Pension Yojana from October 1, 2022.**

- Atal Pension Yojana is a voluntary, periodic contribution-based pension scheme, under which the subscriber would receive a pension at 60 years of age.
- It was launched on May 9, 2015, and operationalized on June 1, 2015.
- It is open to all citizens of India between 18-40 years of age, who have a savings account in a bank or post office.
- Under the APY, the subscribers would receive a fixed pension ranging from Rs. 1000 - Rs. 5000 per month, after the age of 60 years until death, depending on the contribution chosen.
- Initially, the Central Government co-contributed 50% of the subscriber's contribution or Rs. 1000 per annum, whichever is lower for a period of 5 years from 2015-2020.
- This co-contribution was made to subscribers who joined the scheme between June 1, 2015, and March 31, 2016, and who are not beneficiaries of any social security schemes and are not income taxpayers.
- The minimum pension would be guaranteed by the Government
  - If the accumulated corpus based on contributions earns a lower than estimated return on investment and
  - It is inadequate to provide the minimum guaranteed pension.

- Alternatively, if the returns on investment are higher, the subscribers would get enhanced pensionary benefits.
- Subscribers can make contributions to APY on a monthly/quarterly/half-yearly basis.
- Subscribers can voluntarily exit from APY subject to certain conditions, on deduction of Government co-contribution and return/interest thereon.
- On the death of the subscriber, the same pension would be paid to the spouse of the subscriber.
- On the demise of both the subscriber and spouse, the nominees of the subscriber will be entitled to receive the pension wealth, as accumulated till age 60 of the subscriber

**ANSWER WRITING**

**Q. "Religion is a personal matter which should have no place in politics". Elaborate. (150 words)**

**Introduction:**

Sociologist Emile Durkheim defined religion as a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, while Max Weber defines politics as the activity of striving to share power or striving to influence the distribution of power, either among states or among groups within a state.

The resurgence of religion, as well as politics, has become key to world affairs. Initially few sociologists like Max Weber believed that modernity would eventually lead to a general decline of religious faith and the role of religion in the public/political sphere. However, the word 'twin tolerations' has been used often to define the relationship between religion and politics. Modern states brought the concept of secularism to avoid the influence of religion in politics. Arguments in favor of the separation of politics and religion are as follows:

- The idea of religion concerns the private sphere what pertains to individual faith and belief, in contrast politics in the public sphere pertains to a wider community e.g. nation at large.
- The intrusion of religion into politics can monopolize some specific ideology which in turn will cause a rift in the society. E.g. the foundation of partition was laid on the name of religion itself.
- Religious ideologies when perpetuates deeper into the political sphere may turn into mass hysteria leading to the indoctrination of the people. For e.g. Anti-Semitism of Nazi in Germany prior to the second world war for Jews
- In politics it promotes vote bank politics on the name of religion and diminishes the ideals of secularism.
- Intermixing of religion with politics may promote favoritism for a particular community.

**Conclusion**

Religion in politics needs to be value-oriented not power-oriented as we can learn from the legacy of Ashoka policy of Dhamma and Akbar's Din-e-Ilahi. Further, in India secularism was defined in a comprehensive manner which meant the separation of religion from politics and the state, the treatment of religion as a private matter for the individual, state neutrality towards or equal respect for all religions, absence of discrimination between followers of different religions, and active opposition to communalism.

**MCQs**

- Which of the following rank India hold globally in start-up ecosystem and Unicorns?
  - 1<sup>st</sup>
  - 2<sup>nd</sup>
  - 3<sup>rd</sup>
  - 4<sup>th</sup>
- Marshall Plan often mentioned in news is related to which of the following?
  - USA recovery after 2008 financial crisis
  - European recovery programme after WW II**
  - Russia's invasion of Ukraine
  - Population control strategy after 1921
- A bilateral exercise named 'Udarashakti' is conducted between India and which of the following country?
  - Malaysia**
  - Bangladesh
  - Myanmar
  - Philippines
- Regarding 'Atal Pension Yojana', which of the following statements is/are correct?
  - It is a minimum guaranteed pension scheme mainly targeted at unorganized sector workers.
  - Only one member of a family can join the scheme.

3. The same amount of pension is guaranteed for the spouse for life after the subscriber's death.

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

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

5. At present, India's natural honey exports are majorly dependent (around 80% of export) on which of the following country's market?

- a) Brazil
- b) Canada
- c) Mexico
- d) **USA**

6. Consider the following statements

- 1. India ranked in top ten globally in terms of Production and export of honey
- 2. In India, North East Region and Maharashtra are the major natural honey producing areas

Choose the correct statement using the codes given below

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

7. 'Principle of collective defence' Often seen in news, is related to which organisation?

- a) BRICS
- b) UNSC
- c) ASEAN
- d) **NATO**

8. Which of the following resolution can be considered as the first step towards the formation of NATO?

- a) **Vandenburg Resolution**
- b) Mecklenburg Declaration
- c) Pillnitz Resolution
- d) San Vicente Resolution

9. Which of the following country is not associated with Brussels Treaty of collective defence?

- 1. UK
- 2. USA
- 3. Belgium
- 4. France
- 5. Netherlands

Choose the correct answer using the codes given below

- a) 1 and 2 only
- b) 4 and 6 only
- c) **2 and 4 only**
- d) 3,4 and 5 only

10. Which of the following is /are the founding member/s of NATO?

- 1. US
- 2. UK
- 3. Canada
- 4. France

Choose the correct answer using the codes given below

- a) All except 3
- b) All except 4
- c) 1 and 2 only
- d) **All of the above**