

**“Live life as though nobody is watching, and express yourself as though everyone is listening.” Nelson Mandela**

## INTERNATIONAL AND BILATERAL

### INDIA AND CHINA CHANGING RELATIONS WITH AFRICA

Africa's global outreach is changing as not only are African countries seeking other partners but emerging powers in Asia are also growing in self-confidence.

Recent visit of PM Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping to Africa underscore, both India and China are shaping new narratives of engaging with Africa.

This was PM Modi's second visit to Africa after his visit to Mozambique, South Africa, Tanzania and Kenya in 2016.

In last few years, there have been multiple visits to Africa by the Indian authorities.

PM Modi's visit to Rwanda is the first ever Prime Ministerial visit to the fast-developing East African nation with which India developed its strategic partnership last year.

For both China and India, developing economic ties are of paramount importance though Africa's trading patterns with the Asian giants still remain important.

Africa exports raw materials and imports manufactured goods.

India-Africa trade grew from \$11.9 billion (2005-2006) to \$62.66 billion (2017-2018), it is still no match to China, which is now Africa's largest trading partner (\$166 billion in 2011).

The Indian private sector has yet to take full advantage of the investment climate in Africa.

#### **India's approach is different from China's in the following manner:**

- India lays emphasis on the long term enhancing Africa's productive capacities,
- Diversifying skills and knowledge,
- Investing in small- and medium-sized enterprises.
- However, China's approach is more traditional, resource-extraction,
- 

- infrastructure development and elite-level wealth creation.

Both India and China are laying emphasis on infrastructure and connectivity projects in priority regions of the world. China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), East Africa and the Indian Ocean Region are key focus areas.

#### **Rationale behind India's cross-border connectivity with Easter African countries:**

- To foster more robust people-to-people connections
- Increase investment-led trade and business opportunities.
- Strengthen bilateral partnerships.

#### **India's engagement with Africa:**

India is also seeking to enhance its cultural links with East Africa under the rubric of Project 'Mausam', an initiative of the Ministry of Culture.

The project seeks to revive lost linkages with the Indian Ocean 'world' (East Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia).

#### **India's African cross-border connectivity has three primary forms:**

- a) Maritime-port connectivity under the government's Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) and the SagarMala initiative;
- b) Digital connectivity under the Pan African e-Network project on tele-education and tele-medicine (launched in 2004).
- c) Air connectivity in the form of direct flights from Indian cities to African destinations.
- d) Recently, PM Modi outlined 10 guiding principles for deepening India's engagement with Africa to help in its economic growth and tackle challenges such as terrorism and climate change.
- e) During his recent visit to Uganda, PM said, Uganda is central to India's commitment. He also said, Uganda is also known as the "Pearl

of Africa” with great wealth of resources and rich heritage.

f) The two nations were connected to each other by ancient maritime links, shared struggle for freedom, PM said.

g) According to PM Modi, India’s engagement with Africa would be guided **by 10 principles which are given below:**

- Strengthen our cooperation and mutual capabilities in combating terrorism and extremism;
- keeping cyberspace safe and secure;
- Supporting the UN in advancing and keeping peace.
- India would work with African nations to keep the oceans open and free for the benefit of all nations.
- India will harness its experience with digital revolution to support Africa’s development
- improve delivery of public services;
- extend education and health;
- spread digital literacy;
- Expand financial inclusion; and mainstream the marginalized.

#### **Defence Cooperation:**

a) India’s security and defence cooperation with Africa is mainly limited to maritime cooperation in the form of anti-piracy operations off the coast of Somalia

b) Deployment of Indian forces to UN peacekeeping missions in Africa

c) Regular shipping visits

d) Joint-naval patrolling in the Western Indian Ocean Region. These are mainly with Tanzania, Kenya, Mozambique, and the Indian Ocean island countries Mauritius, the Seychelles, Madagascar and Comoros.

e) China supports Africa’s military transformation by providing equipment, advanced technology, and independent capacity-building in security — and the China-

Africa Defence and Security Forum is an important development.

India, Japan and many African nations have also launched a trilateral initiative:

- The Asia Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC). The AAGC is a consultative initiative between three equal partners (India, Japan and Africa)
- To develop ‘industrial corridors’, ‘institutional networks’ for the growth of Asia and Africa,
- To promote development cooperation.

#### **Way ahead:**

Despite having differences in their approaches both India and China need to develop partnership with African nations in a way that makes Africa a part of their growth story.

#### **INVEST INDIA**

Invest India and Business France have signed an MoU to promote investment facilitation and cooperation between startups of the two countries.

Invest India and Business France will collaborate to promote business and startup ecosystem cooperation through joint activities and exchange experiences to strengthen institutional knowledge.

The goal will be to facilitate direct foreign investment by providing practical investment information to enterprises and support the companies pursuing those opportunities, which contribute positively to economic growth of the two countries.

Invest India is the National Investment Promotion and Facilitation Agency of India and acts as the first point of reference for investors in India.

Invest India is set up as a non profit venture under the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion, Ministry of Commerce and Industries, Government of India.

Operationalized in early 2010, Invest India is set up as a joint venture company between the Department of Industrial Policy &

Promotion (DIPP), Ministry of Commerce & Industry (35% equity), Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) (51% equity), and State Governments of India (0.5% each).

The core mandate of Invest India is investment promotion and facilitation. It provides sector-specific and state-specific information to a foreign investor, assists in expediting regulatory approvals, and offers hand-holding services. Its mandate also includes assisting Indian investors to make informed choices about investment opportunities overseas.

**POSITIVES:**

- India to remain one of the fastest growing economies in the world- International Monetary Fund.
- FDI inflows increased by 37% since the launch of Make in India initiative.
- Leading investors ranked India as the most attractive market.
- Largest youth population in the world.
- Huge domestic market.
- Rising economic influence- IOR and INSTC.
- India registered a record improvement on EoDB ranking from 142 to 100 between 2014-2017.

**GOVT AMENDS DEFINITION OF HYDROCARBON TO INCLUDE SHALE**

The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas has liberalised the definition of petroleum to bring more hydrocarbons such as coal bed methane and shale gas under its fold. Petroleum and Natural Gas (Amendment) Rules, 2018 have been amended in this regard.

Petroleum will now mean naturally occurring hydrocarbons, whether in the form of natural gas, in a liquid, viscous or solid form, or a mixture of these. It, however, does not include coal, lignite and helium occurring in association with petroleum or coal or shale.

Prior to this, the definition excluded shale and therefore barred companies from exploiting it from fields that are producing conventional oil and gas or coal-bed methane.

The amendment of the definition of petroleum is a welcome move as it would

open up exploration of all hydrocarbons in existing fields which is line with the new Hydrocarbon Exploration Licensing Policy (HELP).

It would help in enhancing domestic exploration and production of hydrocarbons and increasing India's energy security and reducing dependency on imports.

The exclusion of natural gas from the purview of GST remains a deterrent to attracting large-scale investments as neither the producers nor the consumers are able to set off the taxes paid on their input and output.

While the Goods and Service Tax (GST) was implemented from July 1, 2017, crude oil, natural gas, petrol, diesel, and jet fuel (ATF) were kept out of it for the time being. No date for their inclusion in GST regime has yet been announced.

Coal Bed Methane (CBM) is an unconventional form of natural gas found in coal deposits or coal seams. CMB is formed during the process of coalification, the transformation of plant material into coal. It is considered a valuable energy resource with reserves and production having grown nearly every year since 1989. Varied methods of recovery make CBM a stable source of energy.

Shale gas is a natural gas formed from being trapped within shale formations. It is unconventional source of methane, like coal-bed gas (in coal seams) and tight gas (trapped in rock formations). It is colourless, odourless gas, lighter than air. It is cheaper than natural gas, releases 50% less CO<sub>2</sub>, hence better source for generating electricity. It also provides feedstock for petrochemicals industry, which is turned into fertilizer, plastics and other useful stuff.

**Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy (HELP):**

Government of India launched a new policy regime for Exploration & Production (E&P) sector namely Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy (HELP) in 2016 which is paradigm shift from earlier policy regime.

**ATAL INNOVATION MISSION & MYGOV LAUNCHES  
"INNOVATE INDIA PLATFORM"**

"#InnovateIndia Platform" is collaboration between the Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) and MyGov, a citizen centric platform of the Government of India.

It will serve as the common point for all the innovation happening across the nation.

The #InnovateIndia MyGov-AIM portal creates the much-needed innovations platform for registering both grassroots and deep-tech innovators at a national level.

With the launch of the platform Indians will be able to upload and rate their/organizations innovation on the platform.

The platform is open to all Indian citizens. Citizens can share their/organizations/ someone else's innovation on the platform by login to the MyGov website.

These innovations can also be shared on various social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook, and Twitter.

**A PARALLEL INJUSTICE SYSTEM**

Many people have advocated the concept of Sharia courts in recent past.

They claim that Sharia courts are mere arbitration centres and not a parallel judicial system.

**Huge difference between the two**

Mediation and arbitration centres are very different from Sharia courts.

In the case of arbitration/mediation, an issue can be referred only when both the parties agree to it and choose their own counsellors.

They don't have judges(qazis) but counsellors who settle the disputes by consulting both the parties.

In the UK, for example, Sharia councils and not Sharia courts are operational which provide advice to those Muslims who voluntarily choose to use them to resolve civil and family disputes.

**Presence in India**

Sharia courts are operational in Bihar and other states. An argument is put forward that

their decisions are never challenged by the people.

If the orders of Sharia courts are not challenged, this doesn't show the acceptance of people.

It shows how the Muslim associations have successfully misled the common people to believe these bodies are courts and if they do not follow their orders, it would be anti-Islamic.

There is also a claim that the Supreme Court never declared Sharia courts unconstitutional. But In Vishwa Lochan Madan versus Union of India and Others in 2005, the Supreme Court held that: "In any event, the decision or the Fatwa issued by whatever body being not emanating from any judicial system recognised by law, it is not binding on anyone including the person, who had asked for it."

Further, such an adjudication or Fatwa does not have a force of law and, therefore, cannot be enforced by any process using coercive methods.

Any person trying to enforce that by any method shall be illegal and has to be dealt with in accordance with law."

Even if both the parties agree to settle their disputes outside the court, these bodies can be called Sharia councils or arbitration centres but under no circumstances can they be called Sharia courts.

Also, if these bodies are to be given this power to settle disputes outside the court, this decision has to come from Parliament by proper legislation and not by a private entity like the All India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB).

**Way Forward:**

All claims put in favour of Sharia courts are baseless.

It is an attempt to mislead the common man and improve the image of this parallel judicial system in the country, which is a threat to the rule of law.

\*\*\*