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SEPTEMBER 2019



Shankar IAS Academy™

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IDSA SEPTEMBER 2019

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IDSA SEPTEMBER 2019

1. CHINA RARE EARTH ELEMENTS

Why in news?

US administration excluded tariff hike on rare earth elements imported from China.

What are Rare Earth Elements?

- The REEs are a set of 17 minerals used to make, among other things, permanent magnets which are used in defence equipment, including actuators, to control guidance systems for airborne smart missiles, as well as in aerospace applications for aircraft components and airstrip maintenance equipment.
- REEs are also used in electronic items like television sets and cell phones and renewable energy equipment like wind turbines and solar panels.
- However, of the 17 minerals, neodymium and praseodymium form the majority of minerals used in permanent magnets, while dysprosium is used in neodymium-iron-boron (NdFeB) permanent magnets to improve their high temperature performance.
- Ironically, rare earths are not rare at all. In fact, they are found in several countries including China, the US, Australia, Brazil, Burundi, India, Malaysia, Myanmar, Russia, Thailand and Vietnam – with global deposit reserves estimated at 120 million tonnes.

What makes Rare Earth Elements rare anyway?

- REE are considered ‘rare’ as they usually exist as compounds fused with other metals, and they also oxidise quickly, making the process of refining and extracting them in commercially viable quantities very expensive, especially in countries with strict environmental and effluent standards.
- Moreover, many of these minerals are found in deposits mixed with radioactive thorium and uranium, which makes processing and disposal quite risky due to possible radiation leaks.
- In the 1960s, the US emerged as the frontrunner in the REE production following the discovery that europium one of the REE elements – could enhance the color red in television sets, and held on to that position till the 1980s.
- But, bringing rare earths under the same regulation as thorium mining by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and the International Regulatory Agency made the REE mining uneconomical.
- Moreover, mining and processing REEs involve huge environmental costs including water contamination through radioactive materials.

- Introducing environment friendly technology also makes it economically-unviable.

Why US is dependent on REE imports from China?

- US, despite having substantial reserves of REE, became dependent on imports was due to a small leak that prevented the last American mine to renew its operating license leading to its closure in 2002.
- As a result, at present, the US has just one operational rare earth mine and not a single processing facility.
- China was quick to exploit the situation to its advantage, almost 30 years ago, in the 1980s, China took the decision to make rare earths a strategic commodity.
- Due to the country's low labour costs and lax environmental regulations, it soon became a market leader.
- Although it possessed around 40 per cent of the REE deposits, it produced around 80 per cent of the global supply.
- To put China's position in the REE export market in perspective, it may be noted that the second largest supplier, which is Australia, produces around 20,000 metric tons as against China's 120,000 metric tons. Moreover, in China, the REEs are mostly located in clay deposits which makes it easier to extract.

- Also, the Chinese environmental standards are less stringent than in the US.

What is USA's plan on REE?

- Given the US dependence on China for sourcing the REEs, the US Department of Defence has been holding talks with REE miners worldwide to explore the alternative sources of supply.
- It has also restarted rare earth mining and has so far produced 15,000 metric tons, as against zero in 2017, and is examining the possibility of developing more sites.
- A bill has reportedly been introduced (but is yet to be passed) to allocate finances to the Department of Energy and its National Energy Technology Laboratory (NETL) in order to develop technologies that could extract REEs from coal and coal by-products from the US mines.
- However, it will take years before the US rebuilds its REE sector and is able to increase the supplies.

What are the options before India?

- India is one of the few countries that has substantial REE reserves.
- However, it ranks low in the REE market and is seen, at best, as a low-cost supplier of raw materials.
- Some of the estimates from 2016 indicate that with 35 per cent of the world's beach sand mineral deposits, the Indian REE industry has the

potential to generate about Rs. 121,000 crores.

- India imports most of the rare earths in finished form as electric vehicle manufacturing is still in its infancy.
- With growing global trends in clean technologies, the demand for critical rare earth minerals will grow.
- While late in joining the race, the Government of India is taking steps to develop and strengthen India's position in the rare earths market.
- While a beginning has been made with the announcement of a National Mineral Policy 2019, covering non-fuel and non-coal minerals, India must strive to acquire expertise in valorizing these minerals and shift to developing its downstream sector.

2. INDO- CHINA M2M RELATIONS

What is the issue?

From various instances it is evident that India and China is maintaining a matured Military to Military (M2M) relationship.

What are the instances of matured military relationship?

- The most convincing argument in support of a successful India-China military relationship is the fact that not a shot has been fired across the 3488 km long Line of Actual Control (LAC) in over 50 years.
- It is also to the credit of the militaries of both countries that they have shown maturity and restraint in

defusing potentially explosive situations such as those in

1. Daulat Beg Oldi (DBO) in 2013,
 2. Chumar in 2014,
 3. Doklam in 2017.
- Over the last half a century, save a bloody confrontation at Nathu La in 1967, where the Indian Army showed 'restrained aggression', a slow, pragmatic and incremental set of confidence building measures (CBMs) have ensured a defined and established set of rules to peacefully deal with transgressions and avoid confrontations.
 - In 2013, a standoff between the two militaries at DBO in eastern Ladakh spurred the signing of a Border Defence Cooperation Agreement (BDCA) in October 2013.
 - However, the standoff at Doklam in the Bhutanese territory in 2017, which lasted 73 days and in the most inhospitable and treacherous terrain along the LAC, tested the mettle and resolve of the militaries of both India and China.
 - It was finally resolved peacefully with both militaries backing off after hectic diplomatic consultations between the affected parties.

What mechanisms are being carried out for better co-operation?

- Implicit mechanisms to improve communication and cooperation are being carried out by both nations in order to defuse confrontation, viz.

1. Flag meetings,
 2. Periodic meetings between field commanders and government officials,
 3. Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination for India-China Border Affairs (WMCC) at the Joint Secretary as well as Director General Border Affairs level,
 4. An annual Defence Dialogue at the Defence Secretary level.
- These were followed up with greater interaction between field commanders through visits to each other's military theatres, resumption of battalion level Hand-in-Hand exercises, port of call visits by Indian ships and visits by military delegations to each other's training institutions.

What are the further area of co-operation needed?

- There has been a growing focus on **Confidence Building Measures** (CBMs) at Sea in the Indo-Pacific Region (IPR).
- The importance of vital sea lanes of communication and commercial shipping traversing the region needs no emphasis.
- In this context, the expanding footprint of the PLA Navy (or PLAN) in the IPR is a matter of concern.
- With the Indian Navy firmly anchored in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), there are both fears of confrontation as well as opportunities for

cooperation between the two navies in the region.

- The statement issued after the **Second Maritime Dialogue** held at Beijing in 2018 described the engagement as “an important mechanism between the two countries for consultations on maritime issues.
- The two parties emphasized the need to further strengthen maritime cooperation as an important area of India-China bilateral relations, and as a platform to strengthen political and strategic mutual trust between the two countries.
- As a next step, CBMs for peaceful conduct at sea, similar to the existing ones for maintaining peace along the LAC, can be explored.
- This can include communication protocols, aid and assistance at sea in case of emergent situations, and cooperation against piracy and maritime terrorism.
- **Facilitating Exchanges Between Military Academic Institutions** – Exchange programmes between war colleges and similar military academic institutions can facilitate a better understanding of each other's views on various contentious issues.
- **Strengthening Communication** – Perhaps the most challenging aspect of a relationship is communication, the first major hurdle is language.

- There are very few Chinese and Hindi language experts in each other's militaries.
- Resultantly, stand-offs and confrontations at the tactical level cannot often be easily resolved due to the lack of knowledge of the other's language.
- A concerted effort is therefore required to train military personnel in each other's language schools in order to build a cadre of translators and interpreters.
- **Jointly Tackling Non-Traditional Threats** - The vast and inhospitable LAC is a test of human endurance.
- Avalanches, floods and landslides are a common occurrence, which occasionally cut off communication and road/rail networks, affecting communities on both sides.
- Humanitarian aid to each other's people can deepen the bonds of goodwill and empathy between them.
- Protocols and standard operating procedures (SOPs) to enhance cooperation in such emergencies can be a positive step in further enhancing the CBMs.

3. ADDITIONAL ALLOCATIONS FOR DEFENSE SERVICES

Why in news?

A recent press report indicates that the Indian Air Force is seeking an additional allocation of Rs. 40,000 crore.

What is the idea of supplement budgetary allocations?

- Ministry of Finance (MoF) seeks proposals from various ministries and departments for 'Supplementary Demands for Grants' on at least three occasions during the financial year.
- Perusal of the MoF notifications on the subject issued in the recent year shows that, the supplementary demands can be raised in the following situations:
 1. Where advance granted from the Contingency Fund of India has to be recouped;
 2. Where any payment has to be made against a court decree and it cannot be postponed;
 3. Where the requirement of additional funds is immediate, and it can be met by re-appropriation of savings in the grant but require prior approval of parliament under the New Service/New Instrument of Service Rules;
 4. Where MoF may have specifically advised moving of Supplementary Demands in the ensuing session of the parliament; and
 5. Any other case, where expenditure cannot be postponed.

What is additional funding to Defense force all about?

- Indian Air Force is seeking an additional allocation of Rs. 40,000 crore (approximately 50 per cent of

the allocation) this year, primarily for capital expenditure.

- The Ministry of Defence (MoD) routinely asks for additional funds from the Ministry of Finance (MoF), generally at the Revised Estimate (RE) stage, knowing full well that any substantial increase in allocation made at the Budget Estimate (BE) stage is unlikely.
- The available data shows that the actual allocation at the RE stage, as indeed at the BE stage, is generally far lower than the demand projected at these stages.
- Going by the trend of the last five years, there will be no reduction in the allocation at the RE stage.

What are the issues in asking for additional funds?

- Asking for additional funds routinely to make up for inadequacy of budget allocation is arguably not in the spirit of Article 115 (1) of the Constitution of India which provides for supplementary, additional or excess grants to be made during the currency of the year if
 - (a) The appropriation out of the Consolidated Fund of India, authorized by the parliament when it passes the budget, is found to be insufficient.
 - (b) A need arises during the financial year for incurring expenditure upon some new service not contemplated in that year's budget, or

- (c) Any money is spent on any service during the financial year in excess of the amount granted for that service.
- Though asking for additional money during the year is covered by clauses (a) and (b) mentioned above, but this may not to be in consonance with the spirit of Article 115.
- This is evident from the fact that, commenting on excess expenditure over the voted grants for the FY 2014-15, the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) of the 16th Lok Sabha had directed the MoF to evolve an effective mechanism “to restrict the use of Supplementary demands only to rare and emergent cases”

What should be done?

- Government seems to have little fiscal space for accommodating the demand of the armed forces for additional funds, given its quantum on the one hand and the state of its revenues on the other which are already quite stressed.
- The initial allocation made in the union budget is based on estimates of receipts and expenditure for the entire year.
- Shortfall in allocation vis-à-vis the projected demand is a recurring feature of defence budget, which can be dealt with only through fiscally prudent planning and not by seeking additional grants.
- The actual receipts (including capital receipts and borrowings) is generally

lower than the initial estimates, there is little room for providing substantial additional funds to defence or any other sector during the currency of the financial year.

- The government has resolved not to revise the fiscal deficit target for the current year, thus MoF will have to pull out all stops to meet the additional requirement of the armed forces this year.

4. RE-EMERGENCE OF BALAKOT TERROR CAMPS

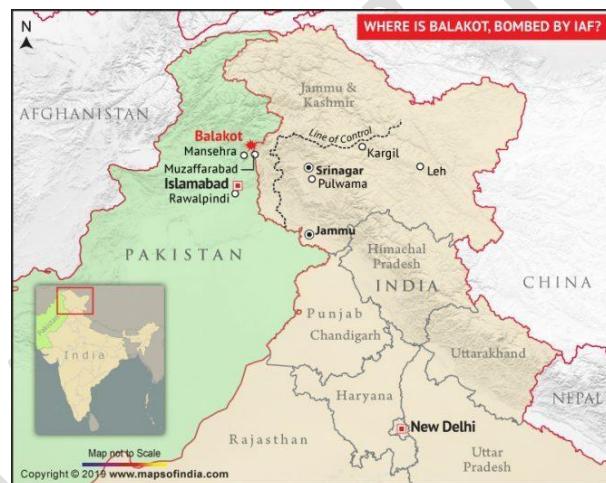
Why in news?

According to official sources terrorist camp in Balakot has begun functioning again.

What is the brief account on Balakot terrorist camp?

- Balakot is some 200 km from Pakistan's capital Islamabad, and 40 km north-west of Muzaffarabad, the capital of Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK).
- Balakot as great symbolic significance for the Jaish terrorist group, located in Mansehra district of Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.
- United States Special Forces killed Osama bin Laden in Balakot, on May 2011.
- Balakot, and indeed the entire Mansehra district, has long been central to the Pakistani security establishment's jihadist project.

- The area has a very large number of mosques and madrassas, and this is where the first camps were set up to train jihadists for the Afghan war and later, for Kashmir.
- Close to Balakot is GarhiHabibullah, where the HizbulMujahideen is reported to have a training camp.



- Indian Air Force hit Jabha Top in Feb 26, 2019, a forested hilltop in Balakot where the Jaish-e-Mohammed had its camp.
- Balakot hosts training camp, spread over six acres, with enough space to accommodate 600 terrorist cadres.

What was the outcome of Balakot airstrike?

- India, confirmed the airstrike characterized it to be a preemptive strike directed against a terrorist training camp, and causing the deaths of a "large number" of terrorists.
- India also claimed to have taken out about 300 terrorists being trained there.

- That action is seen as a punitive response for the Pulwama attack which killed 40 CRPF personnel earlier that month.
- The airstrikes were the first time since the India-Pakistan war of 1971 that warplanes of either country crossed the Line of Control and also since both states have become nuclear powers.

What are the recent findings on Balakot terrorist camp?

- Army chief Bipin Rawat's reveal that the terrorist camp in Balakot has begun functioning again is a deeply worrying development on several counts.
- Though the Army Chief paraded this information on resumption of Balakot camp's activities as yet more conclusive proof that the air force strike had put that terrorist camp out of business for the intervening months, it really comes across as an action that has not had any of the intended effects the planners had hoped for, not one.
- Indeed, it seems to have had the opposite effect.
- Gen. Rawat said that there were 500 terrorists ready to infiltrate into Kashmir, and that to counter those attempts the Army had "thickened" its presence along the Line of Control.
- This is possibly in addition to the troops that were sent into Jammu and Kashmir to strengthen the security

grid ahead of the moves on Article 370 and Article 35A, after which the State has been in a lockdown.

What are the concerns created by recent findings?

- Things that have been turned around in less than seven months opens the door to more questions about the much-touted efficacy of the strike as well.
- Evidently, the Jaish-e-Mohammed, though a banned entity, continues to operate with impunity.
- This underlines the reality that replenishing the numbers of terrorists who are taken out of reckoning is not a challenge for Pakistan's establishment.
- Certainly, the new development in J&K does not increase the Indian people's confidence that the Balakot strike has somehow frightened terrorists and their patrons in Pakistan into demoralized disarray.
- The longer the clampdown lasts, the longer the soldiers remain deployed on trigger fingers, the more the accretion of belligerence continues on either side of the LoC.

5. PAKISTAN'S ROLE IN TRAINING JIHADISTS

Why in news?

Recently Pakistan PM Imran Khan admitted Pakistan's role in training jihadists during the late 1980s and sustaining contacts with them.

What is Pakistan PM's statement all about?

- Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan admitted Pakistan's role in training jihadists during the late 1980s and sustaining contacts with them.
- He said that "there were always links between the security agencies and jihadist groups because the security agencies trained them."
- While Khan may have invited criticism over his remarks, the comments are likely to end up helping Pakistan's case at different forums internationally.
- It's important to note that the question of the militant groups' alleged support base in Pakistan at the state level is considered a sensitive issue, and one that every elected Pakistani government prefers to ignore.

What are implications of Pakistan PM on India?

- Recently, Khan in a statement said that "Anyone, who thinks that he will cross the border to join the Kashmiris (fighting for their right), is a big enemy of them and Pakistan."

- A statement of such enormity that nullifies a decades-old narrative related to "Kashmir jihad" cannot be considered insignificant.
- It's probable that Khan's statements aimed at accepting Pakistan's previous mistakes concerning the country's role in cultivating radical factions are a concentrated attempt to achieve an important goal.
- Contrary to the opinion that Khan's statement proves that Pakistan is responsible for the region's extremism problem, the view actually supports Islamabad's image in a number of ways.

What are the reactions to Pak PM's statement?

- Following Khan's statement on Kashmir, not a single Pakistan-based religious group whose politics focuses on floating Kashmir as a jihadist issue, raised its voice against the government.
- This shows that the government is actually trying to contain groups that may have been operating in Jammu and Kashmir in the past.
- The comments not only feed into Pakistan's recent efforts aimed at getting rid of the stigma of having sponsored terror, but also point toward a fresh policy that rejects the existence of such groups.
- Moreover, Khan's contention helps Pakistan's position when it comes to nullifying New Delhi's efforts to label

Pakistan a state that dispatches militants to Jammu and Kashmir.

What does Pakistani administration tries to convey?

- Islamabad's recent request to the UN Security Council sanctions committee to allow Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD) chief Hafiz Saeed access to his bank account suggests the country's seriousness to demonstrate the world that Pakistan is committed to dealing with all forms of terrorism.
- It's to send a message that Islamabad is doing all it can to contain extremist's financial networks, particularly India focused, as this is from where the country receives most of the pressure.
- Khan's statements indicating Pakistan's sincerity and commitment to tackle the problem of terror are expected to help Pakistan's case at the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).
- Moreover, this will also strengthen Pakistan's support base in the United States, where many want to see Islamabad doing more to alleviate pressure from certain quarters.
- After all it remains unclear whether the statements coming out from the top of the Pakistani government actually reflect a policy change or are just aimed at reversing pressure which the country faces regarding the issue of terrorism.

6. FUTURE OF KARTARPUR CORRIDOR

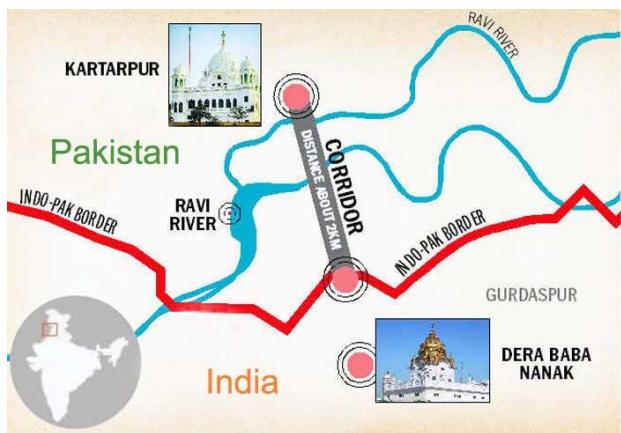
Why in news?

Government of Pakistan has announced plans to inaugurate the Kartarpur corridor in November 2019.

What is Kartarpur corridor plan all about?

- Union cabinet, in 2018 the building and development of the Kartarpur corridor from Dera Baba Nanak in Gurdaspur district to the international border.
- This is in order to facilitate pilgrims from India to visit Gurdwara Darbar Sahib Kartarpur on the banks of the Ravi River, in Pakistan.
- The gurdwara in Kartarpur stands on the bank of the Ravi, about 120 km northeast of Lahore.
- It was here that Guru Nanak assembled a Sikh community and lived for 18 years until his death in 1539.
- The shrine is visible from the Indian side, as Pakistani authorities generally trim the elephant grass that would otherwise obstruct the view.
- Pilgrims would then be able to visit the holy shrine throughout the year.
- The Kartarpur corridor will be implemented as an integrated development project with Government of India funding, to provide smooth and easy passage, with all the modern amenities.

- Government of India will put in place suitable facilities for smooth passage of pilgrims.
- Government of Pakistan will be urged to recognize the sentiments of the Sikh community and to develop a corridor with suitable facilities in their territory as well.



Why the corridor is significant?

- Sikh jathas from India travel to Pakistan on four occasions every year for Baisakhi, the martyrdom day of Guru Arjan Dev, the death anniversary of Maharaja Ranjit Singh, and the birthday of Guru Nanak Dev.
- These Indian pilgrims are given access to all Gurdwaras in Pakistan.
- The corridor is expected to provide visa-free access for Indian Sikh pilgrims to the Gurdwara in Kartarpur Sahib in Pakistan, one of the holiest places for the Sikh community.
- For more than 70 years, there has not been a focus on building interdependence by promoting people-to-people relations between the two countries.

- If anything, the existing popular culture remains focused on lifting enmity and underscoring imagined cultural dilemmas that prevent interdependence between the people of the two countries.

What are exiting hostilities in Indo-Pak relations?

- While the Kartarpur corridor has been dubbed a “peace initiative” with the potential to put the Pakistan-India relationship back on track, the existing hostility between the two countries has significantly altered the corridor’s dynamics.
- By scrapping Article 370 and 35A of its constitution, India has demonstrated that the country is not interested in dialogue with Islamabad.
- Mainly, New Delhi has neutralized all major talking points that Pakistan could take-up with the country to create an environment supporting conditions for potential dialogue.
- As of now, there is precisely no coordination between the two countries except the issue of the Kartarpur corridor.

What are the political and diplomatic gains from the corridor?

- The existing distrust and cynicism at the level of the ruling elites on both sides are not likely to change with the implementation of the Kartarpur corridor.

- Both states view the project as an opportunity to gain politically and diplomatically.
- For Islamabad, the corridor is no longer a conduit to revive normalcy between the two countries.
- Moreover, Pakistan is not likely to look at the subject as an issue that is significant in terms of increasing interdependence between the people of the two countries.
- The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in India doesn't want to halt the work on the corridor because it stands to gain nothing by carrying out such an action.
- The policy decision in this regard for New Delhi convenes at a popular level that exists domestically in the form of appeasing the country's Sikh population.
- It's unlikely that the BJP-led government in India would want to be the first to cancel the ongoing construction work on the corridor.
- Apparently, New Delhi believes that its interests are better served if the decision in this regard comes from Pakistan.
- Pakistan for its part is not going to cancel a project that can offer the country a vital constituency in India.
- Allowing its around 20 million Sikh population to visit one of their holiest places can effectively become a way to sway the policymaking process at some level.

What lies ahead?

- Regardless of what the project means in the longer run, for Islamabad, the timing could not have been worse.
- The integration of Jammu and Kashmir at a time when the Kartarpur corridor has become a highlight of cooperation between India and Pakistan certainly adds pressure on Islamabad.
- Islamabad has to ensure that the project doesn't result in the development of a narrative domestically questioning the existing policy decisions.
- For now, neither India nor Pakistan wants to take the blame for the termination of the project.

7. ARCHBISHOP'S GESTURE AT JALLIANWALABAGH

Why in news?

Archbishop of Canterbury apologized personally for the Jallianwala Bagh massacre.

Who is Archbishop of Canterbury?

- Archbishop of Canterbury is the head of the Anglican Church of the world, commands a worldwide status.
- He also has a special place in Britain, a post granted by the Queen.
- He crowns the British monarch and holds a significant position in the hierarchy of the British state.
- Recently he visited Jallianwala Bagh, for the 100th year remembrance of the massacre.

What is Archbishop's gesture at Jallianwala Bagh?

- Archbishop of Canterbury lay down flat to pray in front of the memorial and said he was “personally very sorry”.
- The Archbishop further added, “I have no status to apologize on behalf of the UK, its government or its history, But I am personally very sorry for this terrible atrocity.”
- He said, “Coming here arouses a sense of profound shame at what happened in this place.
- In his statement on the Amritsar massacre, he said he was not speaking for his country, but the Anglican Church.
- As the senior most churchman in a Christian country, his words do matter.

What is impact of Jallianwala Bagh massacre on India?

- The Jallianwala Bagh massacre is one of the most horrific acts of violence in modern history.
- The impact of General Dyer’s cold-blooded, rational shooting of hundreds of innocent lives, on April 13, 1919, with 1,650 gunshots continues to torment.
- It is not just confined to Punjab, the pain of the carnage forms the collective agony of entire India.
- Dyer’s brutality was justified in the racial climate of those times, he was

celebrated as a hero in certain British circles.

Turning Point in Indian Freedom Struggle **JALLIANWALA MASSACRE**

April 13, 1919



1919: ■ Resentment was high in Punjab after the ruthless British drive to recruit soldiers for World War-I and forced contribution for the war fund

MARCH 30 AND APRIL 6: ■ Gandhiji's call for a country-wide 'hartal' to protest against the Rowlatt Act of 1919 received a tremendous response from Punjab

APRIL 9: ■ Ram Navami day, the Hindu-Muslim solidarity in the celebrations and the unity during the 'hartal' days made Punjab Lt Governor Michael O'Dwyer's administration panicky
■ Gandhiji's entry into Punjab was banned
■ Two popular leaders of Amritsar, Saifuddin Kitchlew and Satya Pal arrested

APRIL 11: ■ Continuing provocations by Britishers led to mass demonstrations in Lahore, Kasur and Gujranwala. Police action in Amritsar led to violence and the city's law & order was handed over to Brigadier-General Reginald Dyer

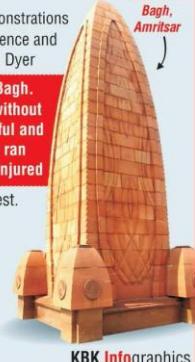
APRIL 13: ■ Baisakhi day, a meeting was called in Jallianwala Bagh. Suddenly Dyer appeared there with troops, blocked the exits and without any warning to the people, ordered firing on the completely peaceful and defenceless crowd. The fusillade continued till Dyer's ammunition ran out. Over a thousand people were reported killed and many more injured

MAY 31: ■ Rabindranath Tagore renounced his Knighthood in protest. The country was now getting charged up to fight British rule

OCT 14: ■ British government forms a committee of inquiry into the events in Punjab

NOV 19: ■ Appearing before the Hunter Committee set up to investigate the ghastly act, Dyer admitted that he acted so to strike terror not only in the city of Amritsar, but throughout Punjab

Source: Excerpts from Recollections and Reflections by Chimanshi H. Setalvad



KBK Infographics

What is UK's stand on its own imperial past and violence?

- It unresolved and controversial historical issue of colonial injustice and apology.
- So far the Queen of UK did not apologize, Prince Philip did not.
- Former British Prime Minister David Cameron on a visit to India in 2013 did not.
- The current British High Commissioner in 2019 did not, the list goes on and each time a British dignitary comes to Amritsar, it feels like scratching a scab on the wound.
- The shrieks of the victims of the massacre continue to hound the legacy of the British Empire.
- They echo as haunting cries of a victimized generation of a community whose trauma has not been fully addressed.

What lies ahead?

- In the light of the descendants of the victims appealing for an apology from the Archbishop to assuage their “hurt feelings against the British atrocities”, the Archbishop’s repentant gesture seeks to lend a healing touch to the echoes of the dead.
- The Archbishop did more than what anybody in his position could possibly do.
- The Archbishop of Canterbury’s compassionate gesture is certainly a symbolic sign of reconciliation and empathy.
- The people of India demand that the British government takes the “historic step” towards tendering an apology.
- Is it not time for Britain to acknowledge the inconvenient truth and trauma of colonial and racial violence? Perhaps, the Archbishop’s initiative marks a new beginning.

8. US-TALIBAN PEACE TALKS

Why in news?

US administration has suspended peace talks with Taliban in Afghanistan.

Who are Taliban?

- The Taliban refer to themselves as the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA), are a Sunni Islamic fundamentalist political movement and military organization in Afghanistan currently waging war (an insurgency, or jihad) within that country.

- From 1996 to 2001, the Taliban held power over roughly three quarters of Afghanistan, and enforced there a strict interpretation of Sharia, or Islamic law.
- The Taliban emerged in 1994 as one of the prominent factions in the Afghan Civil War and largely consisted of students (talib) from the Pashtun areas of eastern and southern Afghanistan who had been educated in traditional Islamic schools, and fought during the Soviet-Afghan War.
- The totalitarian Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan was established in 1996 and the Afghan capital was transferred to Kandahar.
- It held control of most of the country until being overthrown after the American-led invasion of Afghanistan in December 2001 following the September 11 attacks.
- At its peak, formal diplomatic recognition of the Taliban's government was acknowledged by only three nations: Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.
- The group later regrouped as an insurgency movement to fight the American-backed Karzai administration and the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in the War in Afghanistan.
- The Taliban have been condemned internationally for the harsh enforcement of their interpretation of Islamic Sharia law, which has resulted

in the brutal treatment of many Afghans, especially women

- The Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence and military are widely alleged by the international community and the Afghan government to have provided support to the Taliban during their founding and time in power, and of continuing to support the Taliban during the insurgency.
- The Taliban has been continually engaging in a series of attacks against civilians throughout the course of the talks.
- One estimate suggests that it has engaged in 173 terror attacks resulting in close to 1300 fatalities in 2019 alone.

What is brief account of US-Afghan War?

- The War in Afghanistan followed the United States invasion of Afghanistan of 7 October 2001, when the United States of America and its allies successfully drove the Taliban from power in order to deny al-Qaeda a safe base of operations in Afghanistan.
- Since the initial objectives were completed, a coalition of over 40 countries (including all NATO members) formed a security mission in the country.
- The war has since mostly involved US and allied Afghan government troops battling Taliban insurgents.
- The war in Afghanistan is the longest war in US history, This war was entered into without any forward

planning or thought of long term stabilization of Afghanistan

- The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have together cost the American taxpayer almost \$6 trillion since 2001.
- So eventually, the US has realized the futility of the military option.
- The need to stop the ceaseless fighting has become the top priority for all parties.
- In 2018, the administration of US President Donald Trump asked the State Department to explore the possibility of talks with the Taliban.
- This signalled a major paradigm shift in American policy towards the Taliban.
- Zalmay Khalilzad, the former American ambassador to Afghanistan, was appointed the special US envoy to initiate the peace process.
- Reaching out to the Taliban, a framework peace deal was agreed “in principle” in January 2019.
- The current talks are directed towards materializing this framework.
- At the close of these talks, both sides agreed to an “agreement in draft” on two of the most critical areas central to American interests
 1. A commitment by the Taliban to not allow anti-American activities on Afghan soil
 2. A time-bound withdrawal of American troops

Why US-Taliban peace talk was suspended recently?

- There are about 14,000 US plus another 17,000 NATO troops in Afghanistan. The Taliban have demanded a complete withdrawal of foreign troops.
- Though peace has returned to Afghanistan, it has been tenuous with Taliban conducting regular terror activities.
- Since October 2018, Taliban representatives and US officials have been meeting in Doha, Qatar trying to thrash out a peace treaty.
- Many security analysts in Afghanistan and elsewhere had criticized the US-Taliban talks as it had kept the Afghanistan government out.
- Many believe that the talks would legitimize Taliban, a terror organization, nurtured by Pakistan for years.
- After an attack which killed 12 people in Kabul, US called off the peace talks with Taliban, since they failed to agree ceasefire during peace talks.

What does it mean for India?

- Afghanistan is a strategic investment for India, and India has made significant contributions to the rebuilding of the country.
- With the talks called off, India can heave a sigh of relief. India was always skeptical of the outcome of the US-

Taliban talks without the participation of the elected Afghanistan government.

- To India's dismay Pakistan was playing a more active role in the discussions with many in the West seeing it as the country that got a recalcitrant Taliban to the negotiating trouble.
- While Pakistan believes that Taliban have a major role in Afghanistan's future, India's stance is the group is a non-state actor.
- India believes that the talks had to do more with American withdrawal rather than a roadmap for permanent peace in Afghanistan.
- Many in the security establishment believe that the withdrawal of foreign troops from the country will push Afghanistan back to medieval times. The prospects of a civil war loom large.
- If Afghanistan did slip into a full-fledged civil war then it would be easier for Pakistan to push Afghan jihadist into Kashmir.