

INDIA AND FOREIGN RELATIONS**India-Armenia Relations**

- Armenia and India celebrated 30 years of bilateral diplomatic relations in the year 2022.

Historical Links:

- The Mamikonians, a revered aristocratic dynasty which controlled vast swathes of Armenia until the 8th century. A branch of the family moved between Armenia and India, and the greatest warrior it produced — the fifth-century military commander Vartan Mamikonian — bore a Sanskrit name.
- Centuries before Vartan Mamikonian led his forces in defence of Christianity against the Persian army, a pair of Indian princes from Magadha had taken refuge in Armenia and even been allowed to raise Hindu settlements.
- That warmth and liberality were reciprocated by Indian rulers as late as the Mughal era. In 17th-century India, Armenians were highly valued for their artisanship, granted trade privileges, and taken on as advisors by royal courts.
- So extensive was the network of Armenians in India that by the 19th century, Kolkata — home among other Armenian-Indians, had gained a reputation as an Armenian city.

India's Contributions for Armenian State:

- India is the land where generations of Armenian diaspora communities have thrived and gave shape to the dream of reviving the Armenian state.
- It was in Chennai that ideas of resuscitating the Armenian state first bloomed.
- As early as 1773, Shahamir Shahamirian, the great Armenian nationalist based in southern India, published his pamphlet on a future Armenian state – a work that has justly come to be regarded as both a roadmap and a draft constitution for a reconstituted Armenia.
- Later, the first Armenian language journal, Azdarar, was published from Chennai. Together, these two works of print galvanised Armenian communities around the world and sparked a national consciousness.
- The Armenian republic which existed briefly between 1918 and 1920 was the culmination of an aspiration that had acquired wings in India.
- The Armenian republic which was reborn in 1991 was recognised by India a day after the Soviet Union's demise.
- India chose Yerevan, the Armenian capital, as the site of its first embassy in the Caucasus.

Areas of Cooperation:

- Armenia is the only country in the region with which it has a friendship and cooperation Treaty (signed in 1995 in New Delhi).
- India has received three heads of states from Armenia, but none from Azerbaijan or Georgia.
- In addition, there are over 30 Agreements/MoUs covering diverse areas of possible cooperation such as trade and commerce, culture, tourism, education, defense, science and technology, information technology, double tax avoidance, academic cooperation between institutes and think tanks, etc.

➤ Trade and Economic Relations:

- The level of bilateral trade and investments remains below potential though some growth has been registered in recent years.
- Indian exports consist of foodstuffs (meat), electrical equipment, cut and polished diamonds, optical equipment, plastics, pharmaceuticals and other chemical goods and cars, while Armenia's exports include non-ferrous metals, raw-rubber, books and textiles.

➤ Cultural Cooperation:

- India-Armenia Agreement on Cooperation in Culture, Arts, Education, Tourism, Sports and Mass Media was signed in 1995.
- It provides the framework for cultural exchanges.
- Later, a Centre for Hindi Language and Literature was established at Yerevan State Linguistic University "Brusov" (YSLU).
- An abridged version of Ramayana in Armenian language was brought out by the Mission in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture of Armenia.
- Indian films and food are very popular in Armenia.

➤ Indian Community:

- The partnership between Armenia and India is pushed forward to a great extent by ordinary people from both countries — as it was two thousand years ago.
- The Indian community in Armenia consists of students pursuing medical education at Yerevan State Medical University.
- The Indian community otherwise is miniscule composed of Indian/PIO professionals working for multinational companies/UN organizations.
- No incident of racial, communal or ethnic violence against the Indian community has come to notice.

India's Approach on Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict

- India has adjusted its position on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict as the situation has evolved over the years.
- In the initial stages of the conflict in 1993, India had endorsed the concept of respect for territorial integrity.
- For quite some time now, India's emphasis has been on a peaceful resolution of the conflict through diplomatic negotiations.
- India has adopted a balanced and neutral stance and made a politically correct statement in which it has expressed its concern.
- Armenia extends its unequivocal support to India on the Kashmir issue whereas Azerbaijan not only supports but also promotes Pakistan's narrative on this issue.
- India has every reason not to support Azerbaijan's territorial integrity as Azerbaijan has shown scant regard for India's territorial integrity violated by Pakistan in Jammu and Kashmir.

Way Ahead

- It is difficult for India to publicly endorse Nagorno-Karabakh's right for self-determination in view of the possible repercussions it can have repercussions for India.
- Adversaries may misuse it not only by making erroneous connections with Kashmir but also reignite secessionist movements in certain parts of India.
- Confidence-building measures between Azerbaijan, the Republic of Artsakh and Armenia are needed.

GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND INTERVENTIONS

National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG)

- Recently, the National Ganga Council informed that the Union government has spent more than Rs 13,000 crore on cleaning the Ganga since 2014.
- The council met after three years. It is chaired by the Prime Minister.

More about the news

CLEANING THE GANGA

Amount disbursed by NMCG from 2014-15 to 31 Oct, 2022

Sum given to states
₹13,046.81 cr

Uttar Pradesh	₹4,205.41 cr
Bihar	₹3,516.63 cr
West Bengal	₹1,320.39 cr
Delhi	₹1,253.86 cr
Uttarakhand	₹1,117.34 cr

Namami Gange Programme:

- The Centre had launched the Namami Gange Programme in 2014 with a total budgetary outlay of Rs.20,000 crore.
- NMCG is responsible for implementation of the government's ambitious Namami Gange programme.

State allocation:

- Uttar Pradesh received the largest outlay among states. About 1,100 km of the Ganga's 2,525-km length falls in Uttar Pradesh.
- Uttar Pradesh was followed by Bihar, West Bengal, Delhi and Uttarakhand.
- The other states which received funds were Jharkhand, Haryana, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.

Significance of Namami Gange programme

- **Creating Sewage Treatment Capacity:** 48 sewage management projects are under implementation and 98 sewage projects have been completed in the states of Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Delhi, Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, and Rajasthan. Creating River-Front
- **Development:** 68 Ghats/Crematoria projects for construction, modernization, and renovation of 267 Ghats/Crematoria and Kunds/Ponds have been initiated.
- **River Surface Cleaning:** River Surface cleaning for collection of floating solid waste from the surface of the Ghats and River and its disposal are afoot and pushed into service at 11 locations.
- **Biodiversity Conservation:** One of NMCG's long-term visions for Ganga rejuvenation is to restore viable populations of all endemic and endangered biodiversity of the river, so that they occupy their full historical range and fulfil their role in maintaining the integrity of the Ganga River ecosystems.

- **Afforestation:** One of the major components of Ganga rejuvenation is 'forestry interventions' to enhance the productivity and diversity of the forests in head water areas and all along the river and its tributaries.
- **Public Awareness:** A series of activities such as events, workshops, seminars and conferences and numerous activities are organised to make a strong pitch for public outreach and community participation in the programme.
- **Industrial Effluent Monitoring:** To regulate the number of Grossly Polluting Industries (GPIs).
- **Ganga Gram:** Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation identified 1674 Gram Panchayats situated on the bank of River Ganga in 5 States (Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal).

National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG)

- It was registered as a society in 2011 under the Societies Registration Act 1860.
- It acted as the implementation arm of National Ganga River Basin Authority (NGRBA) which was constituted under the provisions of the Environment (Protection) Act (EPA), 1986.
- NGRBA has since been dissolved with effect from 2016 consequent to the constitution of National Council for Rejuvenation, Protection and Management of River Ganga which is referred as National Ganga Council.

Aim & Objective of NMCG

- To ensure effective abatement of pollution and rejuvenation of the river Ganga by adopting a river basin approach to promote inter-sectoral coordination for comprehensive planning and management.
- To maintain minimum ecological flows in the river Ganga with the aim of ensuring water quality and environmentally sustainable development.
- The Act envisages five tier structure at national, state and district level to take measures for prevention, control and abatement of environmental pollution in river Ganga and to ensure continuous adequate flow of water to rejuvenate the river Ganga as below:
- National Ganga Council under the chairmanship of Prime Minister of India.
- Empowered Task Force (ETF) on river Ganga under chairmanship of Union Minister of Jal Shakti (Department of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation).
- National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG).
- State Ganga Committees.
- District Ganga Committees in every specified district abutting river Ganga and its tributaries in the states.

NMCG has a two-tier management structure and comprises of:

- ✓ Governing Council
- ✓ Executive Committee
- ✓ Both are headed by Director General, NMCG.
- ✓ The Executive Committee has been authorised to accord approval for all projects up to Rs.1000 crore.
- State Programme Management Groups (SPMGs) acts as the implementing arm of State Ganga Committees.

PRELIM FACT

1. A vagrant Great White Pelican spotted near Pulicat lake

- ✚ Alone Great White Pelican was spotted for a few fleeting moments at the Nelapattu Bird Sanctuary, located at the end of the Pulicat lake in Andhra Pradesh, on December 29.
- ✚ The sighting was documented by K.V.R.K. Thirunaranan, founder of The Nature Trust, and K. Hussainaiyah, bird watcher and guide at the sanctuary.
- ✚ The Great White Pelican has two distinct populations — one in eastern Europe and Asia and the other in Africa. The bird is a winter visitor to Africa and Asia, noted Mr. Thirunaranan in a research article on the sightings of the bird in Pallikaranai in the Journal of Threatened Taxa in 2017.
- ✚ One member of the species was last seen on and off in the Pallikaranai marshland from December 2014 to July 2015. Very few records of this species are available in southern India,
- ✚ "What makes this visitor unique is that it is a heavy bird weighing around 6 kg and, like the last time, it has flown in from a faraway land alone and lives among a group of pelicans," Mr. Thirunaranan said.
- ✚ The available literature on the species indicates that this sighting could be considered a new winter distribution range for it in India.
- ✚ According to birdwatchers at Nelapattu, a Great White Pelican was seen a few times in 2017 and 2018. However, there are no records of those sightings.

2. A strong case exists for marriage equality

- ✚ A recent statement by a Member of Parliament that same-sex marriages are against the (so-called) cultural ethos of India has once again stirred up the debate on marriage equality.
- ✚ This is amidst a petition for marriage rights of same-sex couples (under the Special Marriage Act, 1954) pending before the Supreme Court of India.

- ✦ The most obvious hurdle in adjudication seems to be the legitimacy of the institution — i.e., whether courts should intervene in marriage rights or leave it to the wisdom of Parliament.
- ✦ However, another factor that may guide the Court urging it to intervene here is that it previously decriminalised consensual same-sex conduct on the basis of the ‘right to equality’ and not merely the ‘right to privacy’.
- ✦ An aspect to the LGBTQ community’s legal battle has been whether the law criminalising sexual conduct has been violative of the right to privacy or the right to equality. In the former, one’s sexual orientation and choice of a sexual partner were held intrinsic to privacy and personal liberty. In the latter, equal treatment of same-sex couples with those of heterosexual couples was considered paramount.
- ✦ As argued by lawyer Jonathan Berger, this makes a difference because while a privacy analysis calls for a complete ‘hands-off’ approach from the state where it should not interfere, an equality analysis requires the state to take positive steps to ensure equal treatment in all spheres of life.

Thus, once equal treatment with heterosexual persons is established, it ought to become simpler to seek sequential rights of equalising age of consent, prohibiting employment discrimination, rights in marriage, adoption etc.

ANSWER WRITING

Q. What are the continued challenges for Women in India against time and space?

- Nearly one-sixth of the world’s women live in India and many of them had adorned high offices like that of President, Prime minister, Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Leader of the Opposition, yet there are innumerable women who rarely step outside their homes.
- Challenges faced by Indian women emanates from Hegemonic patriarchy, which is prevalent in Indian society.
- It means the idea that discrimination against women appears to be common sense to such an extent that not only men but even women also become the supporter and perpetrator of the very notion which discriminates against them.

This leads to various problems like:

- Oppression against women starts right from the womb: Female infanticide.
- This can be reflected in poor child sex ratio, i.e. 919/1000 according to census 2011.
- Girls are the worst sufferer of the vicious cycle of poverty and malnutrition.
- This is augmented by a lack of education and reproductive rights.

Motherhood penalty:

- The primary responsibility of taking care of family and bringing up the child is still on the women.
- This includes unpaid care work such as childcare, elderly care, and household work.
- Many women due to family pressures have to retreat from the workforce.

Declining female labour force participation rate (LFPR)

- Despite increasing levels of education and declining fertility rates, the current female LFPR is 23.7%.

Commodification of women

- The women are either shown as docile homemakers or they are shown as sex symbols trying to convince the public at large to buy the product.

Pink collarisation of jobs

- The women are mostly deemed fit for “pink-collar jobs” only, such as teachers, nurses, receptionist, babysitter, lecturer etc. which have been stereotyped for women.
- This denies them opportunities in other fields

Glass ceilings

- Women in India face artificial barriers like stereotypes, media-related issues, informal boundaries, which prevent them from advancing upward in their organization into management-level positions.
- This can be reflected in an increasing wage gap between men and women.

Sexual harassment at the workplace

- #Metoo movement shed light on numerous instances of sexual harassment at the workplace.
- However, due to the slow judicial system, justice hasn’t been delivered to these women.

Lack of political participation of women

- Indian Parliament currently has 11.8% women representation, and state assemblies have only 9%.
- Even though the 73rd constitutional amendment act mandates 33% of panchayat seats to be reserved for women.
- However, The dichotomy between representation and participation can be reflected by the prevalence of “Sarpanch Pati”.

Way Forward

- Indian Society doesn’t need better laws but better implementation.
- Reservation in parliament for women must be implemented as soon as possible.

- The government must empower women through Self-help groups so that they can become financially independent.
- Affirmative action should be pursued by the government to induct more and more women into positions of authority.
- Supreme court judgement of decriminalizing adultery and homosexuality, have reaffirmed women's right to sexual autonomy.
- However, Society has a larger responsibility to disassociate itself from the stigma attached to women's sexuality.
- Women's issues are not a political problem but a social issue, Hence it requires a cultural revolution.
- Movies like Padman and Toilet will help in challenging the hegemonic patriarchy.
- Apart from it, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao initiative is a step in the right direction.
- In order to improve the condition of Indian women, society must remember words of J.L. Nehru: "India To awaken the people, it is the woman who must be awakened. Once she is on the move, the family moves, the village moves, the nation moves".

MCQs

1. Consider the following statements about Bhima- Koregaon Incident.
 1. The battle of Bhima Koregaon was fought on January 1, 1818, between Peshwa Bajirao II and British army commanded by Captain F F Staunton of the East India Company.
 2. The battle was a part of the Third Anglo-Maratha War.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) **Both 1 and 2**
- d) None of the Above

2. Consider the following statement on Comprehensive Migration and Mobility Partnership Agreement" (MMPA).

1. India and Australia signed this agreement with Finland.
2. It aims at the facilitation of mobility of students, academics, and researchers, migration for Professional and economic reasons.
3. The provisions of this Agreement will be prejudice to the application of national laws on the stay of foreigners on all the points that are not dealt with in this Agreement.
4. The agreement will not regulate multiple entry visas for professionals and student exchange Programmes.

How many statements are correct?

- a) Only one statement
- b) **Only two statement**
- c) Only three statement
- d) All of the above

3. Consider the following statement on National Mission for Clean Ganga.

1. The mission was started on 2015.
2. National Ganga council is chaired by Union ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate change.
3. As per the programme total budgetary outlay was Rs. 20,000 crore.
4. Out of the total budget Uttar Pradesh received highest fund amongst the other.

Which of the above statements are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 3 only
- c) **3 & 4 only**
- d) 2 & 4 only

4. Consider the following statement

1. Recently the great white pelican is spotted near pullicate lake.
2. It is listed as vulnerable as per IUCN red list.
3. Lake Pullicate is listed under wetlands of international Importance of Ramsar Convention.
4. Lake Pullicate is situated at Andhra Pradesh.

Which of the above statements are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 1 & 3 only
- c) 1 & 2 only
- d) **1 & 4 Only**

5. Consider the statement on Indian lending system

1. Recently ,Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman told Parliament that banks had written off bad loans worth Rs.10,09,511 crore during the last five financial years.

2. NARCL was announced in Union Budget 2020-2021.
3. NARCL was created to resolve stressed loan amounting to 2 lakh crore rupees in a phase manner.
4. A Non performing asset (NPA) is a loan or advance for which the principal or interest payment remained overdue for a period of 120 days.

Which of the above statements are correct?

- a) 1 & 2 only
- b) 2 & 3 only
- c) **1 & 3 only**
- d) 3 & 4 only

6. Consider the following statement on same sex marriage.

1. Recently, the Supreme Court of India had decriminalised the same sex marriage.
2. The constitution of India has defined Right to privacy under article 23.
3. Same sex marriage does not come under the ambit of right to equality rather than right to privacy.
4. Declaring a parliamentary law as null and void is absolute original jurisdiction of the Supreme Court of India.

How many statements are correct?

- a) **Only one statement**
- b) Only 2 statement
- c) Only 3 statement
- d) All of the above statements are correct

7. Consider following statements with reference to Pulicat Lake:

1. It lies at the border of the states of Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu.
2. It is the second largest brackish water lagoon in India, after Sambhar Lake.
3. It receives water from River Penneru and Vamsadhara.

Which of the given above statements is/are correct?

- a) **1 only**
- b) 2 and 3 only
- c) 1 and 2 only
- d) 1 and 3 only

8. Consider the statement on 108 th Indian Science Congress.

1. Theme of this year is 'Science and technology for sustainable development with women empowerment'.
2. STEM stands for science, technology, education and mathematics.
3. Tribal science congress will display indigenous ancient knowledge system and practice.
4. Blue economy an umbrella an umbrella term used for economic benefits derivable from the larger marine ecosystem.

Which of the above statements are correct?

- a. 2, 3 & 4 only
- b. 1, 2 & 3
- c. **1, 3 & 4**
- d. 1 only

9. Consider the statement about Lingayat?

1. The term Lingayat denotes a person who wears a personal linga, an iconic form of god Shiva, on the body which is received during the initiation ceremony.
2. The tradition of Lingayatism is known to have been founded by social reformer and philosopher Basavanna in 12th century Karnataka.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) **Both 1 and 2**
- d) None of the Above

10. Consider the following statement.

1. In 17th-century India, Armenians were highly valued for their artisanship, granted trade privileges, and taken on as advisors by royal courts.
2. Armenia and India celebrated 30 years of bilateral diplomatic relations in the year 2022.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) **Both 1 and 2**
- d) None of the Above