



drishti

News Analysis (14 Sep, 2020)



drishtias.com/current-affairs-news-analysis-editorials/news-analysis/14-09-2020/print

India's Position Shift on Taliban

Why in News

Recently, India has signaled a **shift in its position on engaging with the Taliban** by participating in the commencement ceremony of **Intra-Afghan talks** between the Afghanistan government and the Taliban in Doha, Qatar.

Key Points

- **India's Position Shift:**

- The Indian presence at the Intra-Afghan peace talks indicates that it has changed its position given the ground reality in Afghanistan and the **changing power structure in Afghanistan**.
 - USA's withdrawal has given **Pakistan a major role to play in Afghanistan** directly or indirectly through its proxies.
- However, some experts were of the opinion that India chose to attend the ceremony **because the Afghan government was also at the table**.
- India still **does not recognise** the Taliban.

- **India's Stand:**
 - India believes any peace process must be **Afghan-led, Afghan-owned and Afghan-controlled. i.e.**
 - It has to respect the **national sovereignty and territorial integrity** of Afghanistan and promote human rights and democracy.
 - It also needs to **preserve the progress** made in the establishment of a democratic Islamic Republic in Afghanistan.
 - The **interests of minorities, women and vulnerable sections of society** must be preserved and the issue of violence across the country and its neighbourhood has to be effectively addressed.
 - **Indian interests**, which include the Indian Embassy and Indian companies and workers in Afghanistan, **should also be protected.**
 - India supports an "**independent and sovereign**" Afghanistan. The use of words "independent and sovereign" make it clear that **Pakistan and the ISI should not control the levers in Afghanistan.**
- **Background:**
 - The **USA signed a deal with the Taliban** that paved the way towards a full withdrawal of USA troops from Afghanistan and also represent a step towards ending the 18-year-war in Afghanistan.
 - The peace deal was expected to **kick-off two processes- a phased withdrawal of US troops** and an '**intra-Afghan**' dialogue.
 - The deal is a fundamental step to deliver a comprehensive and permanent ceasefire and the future political roadmap for the Afghanistan peace process.
- **India's Interests in Afghanistan:**
 - India has a **major stake** in the stability of Afghanistan. India has invested considerable resources in Afghanistan's development. **E.g.** the **Afghan Parliament, the Zaranj-Delaram Highway, Afghanistan-India Friendship Dam (Salma Dam)** among others.
 - Afghanistan is the **gateway to Central Asia.**



Issues Involved:

- India is concerned about the **Taliban’s links with Pakistan’s ISI** and efforts by the latter to use the **Haqqani network** to target India’s interests in Afghanistan.
 - India’s Afghanistan policy continues to be assessed vis-a-vis Pakistan, which opposes any security role for India in Afghanistan and sees India’s presence there as detrimental to its interests.
- Taliban also has link with **Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM) and Laskar-e-Toiba (LeT)** who are behind various terrorist activities against India.
- India still **does not recognise** the Taliban. However, if it considers the option of entering into direct talks with the Taliban, **it would constitute a major departure** from its consistent policy of dealing only with recognised governments.

Way Forward

- India needs to re-evaluate its decisions and be more omnidirectional in its approach to deal with all forces that are central to the future of Afghanistan.
- The changing political and security situation requires India to be more open to adapting its maximalist position and starting a dialogue with the Taliban.

Source: IE

Singapore Convention on Mediation

Why in News

Recently, the **United Nations Convention on International Settlement Agreements Resulting from Mediation** has come into force.

The convention will provide a more effective way of **enforcing mediated settlements of corporate disputes** involving businesses in India and other signatories.

Key Points

- **About:**

- The **United Nations General Assembly** adopted the Convention on **20th December 2018** and it was **opened for signature on 7th August 2019** in Singapore.
- It is also known as the **Singapore Convention on Mediation** and also the **first UN treaty to be named after Singapore**.
Singapore had worked with the **UN Commission on International Trade Law**, other UN member states and non-governmental organisations for the Convention.
- **India approved the signing of the Convention in July 2019.**
- As on **1st September 2020**, the Convention has **53 signatories**, including China and the USA as well.

- **Significance:**

- The Convention has been designed to become an essential instrument in the **facilitation of international trade** and in the **promotion of mediation** as an alternative and effective method of resolving trade disputes.
- It will ensure that a settlement reached by parties becomes **binding and enforceable in accordance with a simplified and streamlined procedure**.
- **Businesses seeking enforcement of a mediated settlement agreement** across borders can do so by **applying directly** to the courts of countries that have signed and ratified the treaty, **instead of having to enforce the settlement agreement as a contract** in accordance with each country's domestic process.
- The harmonised and simplified enforcement framework will **save time and legal costs**, which are of crucial importance in uncertain times posed by **pandemics** like **Covid-19**.
- Businesses in India and around the world will now have **greater certainty in resolving cross-border disputes** through mediation, as it provides a **more effective means for mediated outcomes to be enforced**.

- **Importance for India:**

- It will **boost India's 'ease of doing business' credentials** by enabling swift mediated settlements of corporate disputes.
- It will also increase **the confidence of the investors** and shall provide a **positive signal to foreign investors** about India's commitment to adhere to international practice on **Alternative Dispute Resolution** (ADR).

Source: TH

USA-Maldives Framework on Defense and Security Relationship

Why in News

Recently, a **Framework on Defense and Security Relationship** has been signed between the **USA and the Maldives**.

The move is seen as consistent with the growing alignment of the USA and Indian interests in the **Indian Ocean Region** (IOR) and **Indo-Pacific**.

Key Points

- The Framework intends to **deepen engagement and cooperation in support of maintaining peace and security in the Indian Ocean**.
- It marks an important step forward in the defence partnership between the USA and the Maldives, where **both of them agreed to reiterate their commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific** that promotes the security and prosperity of all nations in the region.
- The Framework **outlines a range of bilateral activities**, including senior-level dialogues, engagements etc. in areas such as **maritime domain awareness, natural disasters and humanitarian relief operations**.



Significance for India

- **India has not officially responded** to the announcement of the framework **yet**.
- This announcement can be seen as a **timely signal to China**, particularly when Indian and Chinese soldiers are locked in a **stand-off at the Line of Actual Control (LAC)** in Ladakh.
 - The Chinese presence and influence in the IOR have been a **constant source of worry** for India.
 - **India has taken steps to strengthen its strategic presence** in both the IOR and Indo-Pacific.
 - The **Quad**, a grouping that brings together the **USA, Japan, India and Australia**, with the apparent but unstated aim of **containing China** in the region, is also part of this process.
 - **Malabar Exercise** to strengthen the shared objective of a free, open and prosperous Indo-Pacific.
 - **Track 1.5 dialogue** between **India, France and Australia** to identify security challenges and sustainability issues in the Indo Pacific.
 - **Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement** between India and Japan which allows armed forces of both sides to coordinate closely in services and supplies.
- The framework has the **potential to blunt the security aspects of cooperation between China and the Maldives**, even if economic co-operation continues.

In 2017, the Maldives signed up to **China's Belt and Road initiative**. It is a part of the **Maritime Silk Route**.

- Given India-USA ties, India sees the pact as useful also because **India's own direct involvement in Maldivian security matters tends to be viewed with suspicion** domestically.

The framework can **provide an indirect route** to India if needed.

Source: IE

Hybrid Data Warfare by China

Why in News

The Chinese company Zhenhua Data Information Technology Co. Limited is monitoring over 10,000 Indian individuals and organisations in its global database of foreign targets.

Key Points

- **Method:** Zhenhua monitors the **digital footprint** of its targets using **Artificial Intelligence** tools across social media platforms, maintains an **information library**, which includes content not just from news sources, forums, but also from papers, patents, bidding documents, even positions of recruitment.
- **Database:** The database of the company called **Overseas Key Information Database (OKIDB)** has entries from the USA, UK, Japan, Australia, Canada, Germany and the UAE as well.
- **Targets:** Its targets include individuals and institutions in politics, government, judiciary, art and sports, business, technology, media, and civil society.
- **Link to Chinese Government and Intelligence:** The Company counts the Chinese government, intelligentsia and military among its clients.

However, the Chinese government has **denied** having asked the company to collect or provide data, information and intelligence stored within other countries' territories for the Chinese government.
- **Implication:** This information can be used for strategic and intelligence services of China for **hybrid warfare**.

- **Legal Aspects:** The data monitoring by Zhenhua cannot be covered under the **Information Technology Rules, 2011, under the IT Act, 2000**, as it only covers personal data and not information available freely or accessible in the public domain.
 - These rules also do not impose any conditions on the use of personal data for direct marketing etc.
 - Though it emphasizes on data collection by consent which is not done by Zhenhua, the law is impossible to enforce in a foreign jurisdiction.
 - India is yet to have a **data protection law** for protecting the privacy of individuals and national security.
- **India-China Relations:** The recent **Indo-China conflict** due to clashes at the Line of Actual Control and later **banning of chinese apps by India** has led to exponential increase in tension between the two countries. In this scenario, the information assets of Zhenhua can give a **strategic leverage to China over India**.

Hybrid Warfare

- **About:** It refers to using non-military tools to achieve dominance or damage, subvert or influence. These tools include **information pollution, perception management and propaganda**.
- **Background :**
 - **By China:** In 1999, Unrestricted Warfare, a publication by China's People's Liberation Army, talked about hybrid warfare and the need for a shift in the arena of violence from military to political, economic and technological.

There have been many recent reports on China's attempts to collect sensitive military, intelligence or economic information in the USA and Europe through social media.
 - **Lebanon:** Hybrid warfare was used in the **2006 Israel-Lebanon War** by the Hezbollah group.

It employed a host of different tactics like guerilla warfare, innovative use of technology and effective information campaigning.
 - **Russia:** It was also used by **Russia against Ukraine** in the 2014 annexation of Crimea.

It involved a combination of activities, including disinformation, economic manipulation, use of proxies and insurgencies, diplomatic pressure etc.

- **Threats:**

- **Cyber Attacks:** This may include attacks on critical infrastructure like power grids, business systems, and defence systems. These may be used to **disrupt economic activities, undermine institutions, and discredit political leadership and the intelligentsia.**
- **Undermining Democracy:** The foreign government may manipulate the data, spread propaganda and misinformation and influence democratic systems like elections through use of social media, websites, advertisements etc.
The 2016 election of the USA and UK Brexit vote are suspected to have been influenced through such interference by Russia.
- **Inciting Social Discord:** The information may be used to plant disharmony and communal tensions within a society which is eventually a threat to the unity of the country.

Way Forward

- The governments should establish a process to develop a national approach of **self-assessment and threat analysis.** Institutionalizing a process regarding threat and vulnerability information will enhance hybrid warfare early warning efforts, assist resiliency efforts, and may even have a deterrent effect.
- Hybrid threats are an international issue, so should be the response. National governments should coordinate a coherent approach amongst themselves to understand, detect and respond to hybrid warfare to their **collective interests.** **Multinational frameworks** should be developed to facilitate **cooperation and collaboration across borders.**

Source: IE

Monsoon Session of Parliament Begins

Why in News

Recently, the **monsoon session of Parliament** began after several months which was delayed due to the **Covid-19 pandemic**.

However, the government has **suspended Question Hour for the session and has also curtailed the Zero Hour.**

Key Points

- **Parliament Session:**

- The **President of India is empowered to summon** each House of Parliament from time to time.
- The **maximum gap** between two sessions of Parliament **cannot be more than six months**. That means the Parliament should meet at **least twice a year**.
- A **'session'** of Parliament is the period between the first sitting of a House and its prorogation.
- There are usually **three sessions** in a year, viz,
 - **Budget Session** (February to May)
 - **Monsoon Session** (July to September)
 - **Winter Session** (November to December)
- The period between the prorogation of a House and its reassembly in a new session is called **'recess'**.

- **Meetings of Session:**

A session of Parliament consists of **many meetings**. Each meeting of a day consists of two sittings, that is, a morning sitting from 11 am to 1 pm and post-lunch sitting from 2 pm to 6 pm.

- **Termination of Session:**

- A sitting of Parliament can be terminated by **adjournment** or **adjournment sine die** or **prorogation** or **dissolution** (in the case of the Lok Sabha).
- **Adjournment:** It suspends the work in a sitting for a specified time, which may be hours, days or weeks.
- **Adjournment sine die:** It means terminating a sitting of Parliament for an indefinite period.
 - In other words, when the House is adjourned without naming a day for reassembly.
 - The **power of adjournment** as well as **adjournment sine die** lies with the **presiding officer** (Speaker or Chairman) of the House.
- **Prorogation:** The **President** issues a notification for prorogation of the session after the business of a session is completed and the presiding officer declares the House adjourned sine die.

The President can also prorogue the House while in session.
- **Dissolution:** Only the **Lok Sabha** is subject to dissolution. Rajya Sabha, being a permanent House, is not subject to dissolution.
 - A **dissolution ends the life of the existing House**, and a new House is constituted after general elections are held.
 - The **President** is empowered to dissolve the Lok Sabha.

Source: TH

Hindi Diwas

Why in News

Every year, **14th September** is celebrated as Hindi Diwas in India.

Key Points

- **National Hindi Day:**
 - **Hindi**, written in the **Devanagari script**, was adopted as the **official language** of the Republic of India on **14th September, 1949**.
Kaka Kalelkar, Maithili Sharan Gupta, Hazari Prasad Dwivedi, Seth Govindadas made important contributions to make Hindi the official language.
 - Besides Hindi, English is the other **official language (Article 343)** of the Constitution).
 - Hindi is also an **eighth schedule language**.
 - **Article 351** pertains to '**Directive for development of the Hindi language**'.
- **World Hindi Day:** It is observed on **10th January**.
 - The Day commemorates the **anniversary of the first World Hindi Conference** held in **Nagpur on 10th January, 1975**, which saw 122 delegates from 30 countries participating in it.
 - It was **first celebrated in 2006** by former Indian Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh with an aim to promote Hindi language across the world.
 - The **World Hindi Secretariat** building was inaugurated in **Mauritius** in 2018.
- **About the Hindi Language:**
 - **Origin:**
 - Hindi got its name from the **Persian word Hind**, meaning 'land of the Indus River'. Turkish invaders in the early **11th century** named the language of the region Hindi, 'language of the land of the Indus River'.
 - The **modern Devanagari script** came into existence in the **11th century**.
 - **Spoken in Countries outside India:** Hindi is the **fifth most spoken language** among the total languages spoken in the world.
It is spoken in Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, USA, UK, Germany, New Zealand, United Arab Emirates, Uganda, Guyana, Suriname, Trinidad, Mauritius, and South Africa.

- **Government Initiatives to Promote Hindi:**
 - The **Central Hindi Directorate** was established in 1960 by the Government of India under the Ministry of Education.
 - **Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR)** has established '**Hindi Chairs**' in various foreign universities/institutions abroad.
 - **LILA-Rajbhasha (Learn Indian Languages through Artificial Intelligence)** is a multimedia based intelligent self-tutoring application for learning Hindi.
 - **E-Saral Hindi Vakya Kosh** and **E-Maha Shabda Kosh Mobile App**, both initiatives of the Department of Official Language, aim to harness information technology for the growth of Hindi.
 - **Rajbhasha Gaurav Puraskar** and **Rajbhasha Kirti Puraskar** recognise contributions to Hindi.

Source: PIB

Indian Brain Templates: NIMHANS

Why in News

A team of neuroscientists from the **National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS)** has developed **Indian Brain Templates (IBT)** and a **brain atlas**.

NIMHANS is a medical institution located in **Bangalore**, Karnataka. It is the **apex centre** for mental health and neuroscience education in the country and **operates autonomously**.

Key Points

- **Brain Template:** It is a gross representation from various brain images to understand brain functionality in diseased conditions.
- **Background:**
 - The **Montreal Neurological Index (MNI)** template that India currently uses is **based on Caucasian brains**, which are **different from Asian brains**.

The MNI template was made by **averaging 152 healthy brain scans** from just a small slice of the city's population in North America.
 - **Some countries have their own scale to measure the brain**, whereas India is still dependent on the Caucasian brain template.

- **NIMHANS Indian Brain Templates and Brain Atlas:**
 - Neuroscientists **studied over 500 brain scans of Indian patients** to develop five sets of Indian Brain Templates (IBT) and a brain atlas.
 - **IBT provides a scale that will measure an Indian brain.** When most brain scans are taken, they need to be compared to a standard brain template — a model or standard for making comparisons from a group of individual brain scans.
 - Validation experiments and comparisons with existing international templates found that using the **NIMHANS IBTs for Indian brains significantly improved the accuracy of alignment** and thereby noticeably **reducing distortions, errors or biases** in final reports of brain structure and function.
 - **Brain Atlas** has been **developed for five age groups** covering late childhood to **late adulthood (six to 60 years)**.
- **Expected Benefits from IBT and Brain Atlas:**
 - These new population and age-specific Indian brain templates will allow **more reliable tracking of brain development and ageing.**
 - The templates and atlas will provide **more precise reference maps for areas of interest in individual patients** with neurological disorders like strokes, brain tumours, and dementia.
 - These will also help **pool information more usefully in group studies of the human brain and psychological functions**, aiding in understanding of psychiatric illnesses like Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), autism, substance dependence, schizophrenia, and mood disorders.

Way Forward

- There have been similar attempts to develop brain templates previously in India, however they were typically focused on young adults and had a significantly smaller number of subjects. NIMHANS IBTs are based on a comprehensive scan.
- NIMHANS IBTs can be incorporated in normal protocols of brain imaging in India.

Source: TH

Uttar Pradesh Special Security Force

Why in News

The Uttar Pradesh government is going to constitute a Special Security Force (SSF) in the state.

Key Points

-
- On the lines of the **Central Industrial Security Force**, SSF will be responsible for security of vital government and private buildings, and industrial establishments.
It can also be hired by private establishments by paying a fixed cost.
 - It will be headed by an Additional Director General (ADG)-ranked officer and will be headquartered in **Lucknow**.
 - **Powers:** It will **not require magistrate's order or warrants to make an arrest or conduct searches**.
Its powers will be governed by a set of rules made by the state government.
 - **Background :** The UPSSF will **set up on the basis of orders of the Allahabad High Court**, which had expressed its displeasure over the security at civil courts in December 2019 over shootout incidents at Bijnor and Muzaffarnagar courts.
The court had directed the state government to form an exclusive force for security on court premises.

Central Industrial Security Force

- It is a central armed force the Union raised under an Act of Parliament namely **Central Industrial Security Force Act, 1968**.
- It is directly under the **Union Ministry of Home Affairs**.
- The CISF provides **security cover to industrial units, government infrastructure projects and facilities and establishments located all over India**.
- Other **central armed forces** in India include **Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Border Security Force (BSF), Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB), National Security Guard (NSG) and Assam Rifles (AR)**.

Source: IE
