



News Analysis (11 Nov, 2021)

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Delhi Declaration on Afghanistan

Why in News

Recently, the **Delhi Regional Security Dialogue** on Afghanistan was held. The meeting was composed of National Security Advisors' (NSA) of regional countries and **chaired by the Indian NSA.**

- The meeting called for “**urgent humanitarian assistance**” to the Afghan people and urged close cooperation and consultation among the regional countries over the Afghan scenario.
- This is the **third meeting** of the Regional Security Dialogue (the earlier two meetings were held in Iran, in 2018 and 2019).



Key Points

- **Invited Participants:** Afghanistan's neighbours such as **Pakistan, Iran, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan**, and other key players including **Russia, and China**.
- **Need:** After the withdrawal of US forces and the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan, India is concerned about security in the region.

There is a possibility of terrorism spreading from the territory of Afghanistan.

- **Highlights of the Delhi Declaration:**

- **Secure and Stable Afghanistan:** Reiterated strong support for a peaceful, secure and stable Afghanistan while emphasising the respect for sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity and non-interference in its internal affairs.
- **Condemning Terrorism:** Committed to combat terrorism in all its forms and manifestations.

Urged the regional members to ensure that Afghanistan would never become a safe haven for global terrorism.

- **Ensuring Fundamental Rights:** That is, the fundamental rights of women, children and minority communities are not violated.

The assistance should be provided in non-discriminatory manner across all sections of the Afghan society.

- **Collective Cooperation:** Called for a collective cooperation against the menace of **radicalization, extremism, separatism and drug trafficking** in the region.
- **Central Role of UN:** Recalling the relevant UN Resolutions on Afghanistan, they noted that the **United Nations' (UN)** continued presence in the country must be preserved.

The recent **UN Resolution 2593** reiterates the importance of combating terrorism in Afghanistan, including those individuals and entities designated pursuant to **resolution 1267**.

- **Response by the Regional Countries:**

- **Russia** held that **multiple dialogue mechanisms “should not complicate”** the unfolding situation in the Taliban controlled Afghanistan.
- **Pakistan and China** too were invited to participate in the consultation but both stayed away.
- Moreover, there was **no representation from the erstwhile Afghan government or the Taliban.**
- **Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan’s NSAs did not mention the word terrorism** at all in their opening statements.

- **Other Afghan Peace Process Framework:**

- **Troika Plus Meeting on Afghanistan:** The U.S.-Russia-China-Pakistan grouping on Afghanistan peace process.
- **Moscow Format on Afghanistan:** It was set up by Russia for Peace and stability in Afghanistan in the year 2017.

It is a six-party mechanism. It involved Russia, India, Afghanistan, Iran, China and Pakistan.

Way Forward

- **Inclusive Government:** The solution comes only through the formation of an inclusive government with the participation of all ethnic groups.
- **Russian Support:** Russia has cultivated links with the Taliban in recent years. India would need Russia’s support in any form of direct engagement with the Taliban.

- **Bonhomie With China:** India should talk with China, with the objective of finding a political settlement and lasting stability in Afghanistan.
- **Engaging with Taliban:** Talking to the Taliban would allow India to seek security guarantees from the insurgents in return for continued development assistance or other pledges as well as explore the possibility of the Taliban's autonomy from Pakistan.

Source: TH

India Sweden Innovation Meet

Why in News

On 26 October, 2021, India and Sweden celebrated the **8th Innovation Day**.

Theme: Accelerating India Sweden Green Transition

Key Points

- **Green Transition:**
 - **India** is well on its way to meet and **exceed its Paris Climate commitments**.
 - **Sweden's** goal is of achieving **net-zero emissions by 2045** and negative net emissions following that.
 - India and Sweden are **together in the UN (United Nations) led industrial transition programme ('Leadership Group for Industry Transition')**.
Both have the impacts of innovation with the **launch of Hybrit Green Steel** (with low carbon footprint), in a sector that accounts for approximately 30% of global greenhouse gas emission.
- **Science & Technology & Research and Innovation:**
 - The India Sweden innovation collaborations are **guided by the India Sweden Innovation Partnership and the Joint Action Plan (JAP)**.
 - In 2018, the JAP was signed to include smart cities, innovation, and next generation transport.
 - In addition, the Department of Biotechnology is already engaged with Swedish Partners on Incubator Connect, Digital Health Care and Global Bio India programmes, enhancing the **partnerships in the field of Biotechnology**.
- **Call on Circular Economy:**
 - Both countries had a new joint call on **Circular economy** including the theme such as Health Science and Waste to Wealth.
Circular Economy entails markets that give incentives to reusing products, rather than scrapping them and then extracting new resources.
 - Agreed to launch the new call in 2021-2022 on broad themes viz., Public health, prevention, and health promotion Organization and provision of care for the elderly.

India - Sweden Relations



- **Political Relations:**

- Diplomatic relations **were established in 1948 and steadily strengthened** over the decades.
- The **first India-Nordic Summit** (India, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Iceland and Denmark) took place in the year 2018 in Sweden.
- Sweden also participated in the First **India Nordic Baltic** (including Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) **Conclave** co-chaired by India in November 2020.

- **Multilateral Engagement:**

- India and Sweden jointly launched the **Leadership Group on Industry Transition (LeadIT)** in association with **World Economic Forum (WEF)** at the **UN Climate Action Summit** in 2019.
- In the 1980s **India and Sweden worked together on nuclear disarmament** issues within the framework of the ‘**Six Nation Peace Summit**’ (that also included Argentina, Greece, Mexico and Tanzania).
- At the UN General Assembly, India and Sweden present an **annual Joint Statement on Humanitarian Affairs**.
- In 2013, during the Swedish Presidency, **India joined the Arctic Council as an Observer** at the Kiruna Ministerial Meeting.

- **Economic and Commercial relations:**

- India is Sweden’s **third-largest trade partner after China and Japan in Asia**.
- **Trade in goods and services** has increased from USD 3 billion (2016) to USD 4.5 billion (2019).

- **Defence and Aerospace (Sweden-India Joint Action Plan 2018):** It highlights collaboration on space research, technology, innovation, and applications.

Way Forward

- Being a member of the **European Union**, Sweden can play an important role in India’s partnership with the EU and EU countries.

- Strategic engagements, bilateral trade and investment scenarios are expected to embolden shared economic progress under mutually beneficial nomenclature.
- The ongoing momentum of consolidation of strategic interests between New Delhi and Stockholm in the aftermath of **March 2021 summit** is expected to make an impeccable imprint in regional and global levels especially in defining the post **Covid-19** geopolitical chessboard, especially in the context of India ascending to **G-20** presidency in 2023.

Source: PIB

MPLAD Scheme

Why in News

The Union Cabinet has approved the **restoration of the Member of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS)** for the remaining part of Financial Year 2021-22 till **2025-26**.

- It will be **co-terminus with the period of the 15th Finance Commission**.
- The scheme was **suspended for two financial years (2020-21 and 2021-22)**.

Key Points

- **About:**

It is a **Central Sector Scheme** which was announced in December 1993.

- **Objective:**

To **enable MPs to recommend works of developmental nature** with emphasis on the creation of durable community assets in the areas of drinking water, primary education, public health, sanitation and roads, etc. **primarily in their Constituencies**.

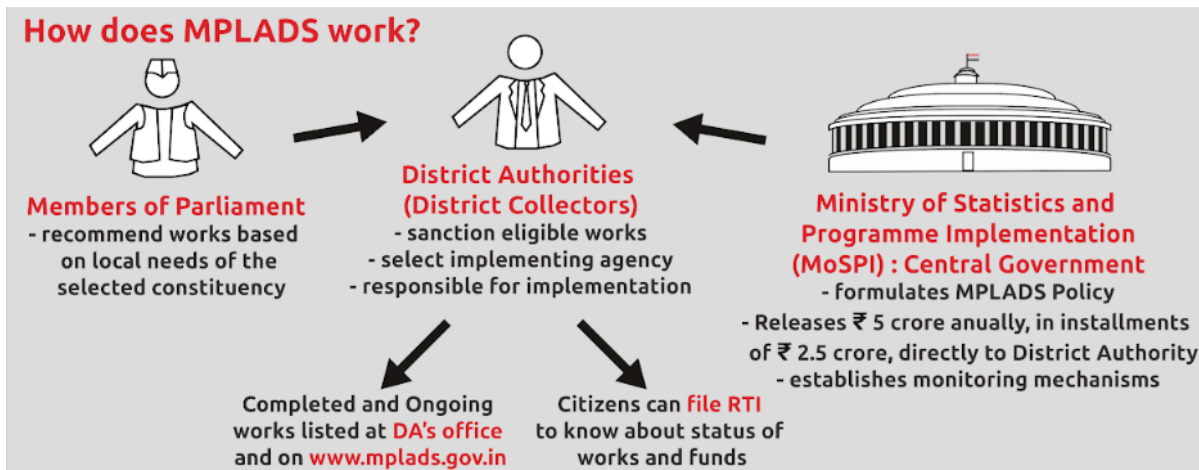
Since June 2016, the MPLAD funds can also be used for implementation of the schemes such as **Swachh Bharat Abhiyan**, **Accessible India Campaign (Sugamya Bharat Abhiyan)**, conservation of water through rain water harvesting and **Sansad Aadarsh Gram Yojana**, etc.

- **Implementation:**

- The process under MPLADS **starts with the Members of Parliament recommending works to the Nodal District Authority**.
- The **Nodal District concerned is responsible for implementing the eligible works** recommended by the Members of Parliament and maintaining the details of individual works executed and amount spent under the Scheme.

- **Functioning:**

- **Each year, MPs receive Rs. 5 crore in two instalments** of Rs. 2.5 crore each. Funds under MPLADS are **non-lapsable**.
- Lok Sabha MPs have to recommend the **district authorities projects in their Lok Sabha constituencies**, while **Rajya Sabha MPs have to spend it in the state that has elected them** to the House.
- **Nominated Members** of both the Rajya Sabha and Lok Sabha **can recommend works anywhere** in the country.



- **Significance of Restoration of the Scheme:**

- It will **restart fulfilling the aspirations and developmental requirements of the local community and creation of durable assets**, which is the primary objective of the MPLADS.
- It will also **help in reviving the local economy**.

- **Issues with MPLADS:**

- **Implementation Lapses:** The **Comptroller and Auditor-General of India (CAG)** has flagged instances of financial mismanagement and artificial inflation of amounts spent.
- **No Statutory Backing:** The scheme is not governed by any statutory law and is subject to the whims and fancies of the government of the day.
- **Monitoring and Regulation:** The scheme was launched for promoting participatory development but there is no indicator available to measure level of participation.
- **Breach of Federalism:** MPLADS encroaches upon the domain of local self governing institutions and thereby violates **Part IX and IX-A** of the Constitution.
- **Conflict with Doctrine of Separation of Powers:** MPs are getting involved in executive functions.

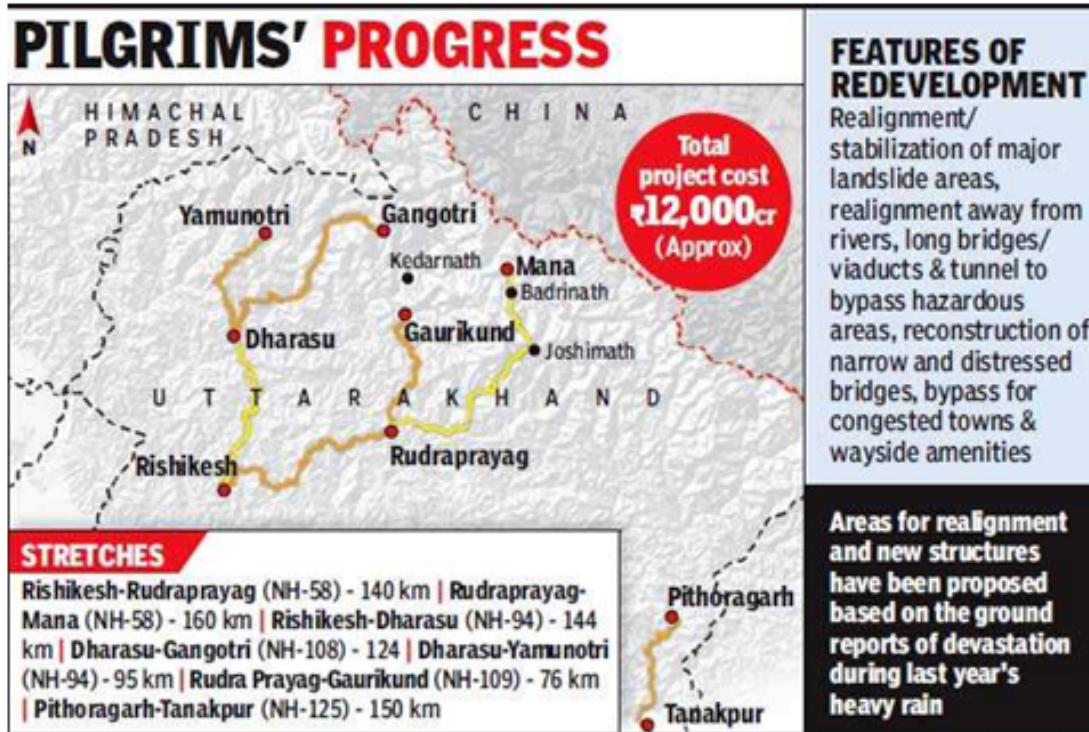
Source: PIB

CharDham Project

Why in News

Recently, the **Supreme Court (SC)** has spoken of the **need to balance national security concerns with environmental issues in the context of the Army's request to expand the CharDham Project (CDP) roads leading to the Indo-China border.**

The request came in the context of construction being carried out by China across the border. However, expansion of roads has been **opposed by an NGO citing environmental concerns.**



Key Points

- **About Chardham Project:**

- **Objective:** CharDham Pariyojana aims to “**improve the connectivity** to the Chardham pilgrimage centres (**Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri, Yamunotri**) in the Himalayas, making journeys to these centres safer, faster and more convenient.

It will widen almost 900 km of highways connecting the pilgrimage sites and the Tanakpur-Pithoragarh stretch of National Highway (NH) 125, a part of the **Kailash Mansarovar Yatra route**.

- **Role in National Security:** This project can act as the strategic feeder roads which connect the India-China border with the Army camps in Dehradun and Meerut where missile bases and heavy machinery are located.
- **Implementing Agencies:** Uttarakhand State Public Works Department (PWD), **Border Roads Organisation (BRO)** and the National Highway & Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL).

NHIDCL is a fully owned company of the Ministry of Road Transport & Highways.

- **Environmental Concerns About the Project:**

- The project **may destroy about 690 hectares of forests** with 55,000 trees and **evacuate an estimated 20 million cubic metres of soil**.
- Ruthless harvesting or uprooting of vegetation in the widening of roads **can prove to be perilous for the biodiversity and regional ecology**.

Birds like Kalij Pheasant (*Lophura leucomelanos*, **Schedule-I**), Tragopans (Tragopan melanocephalus & Tragopan satyra, Schedule-I), and various species of Vultures (Schedule-I) along with endangered fish Golden Mahseer (*Tor putitora*) are among the wonderful species found there.

- While there is no link between the CharDham project and the recent **glacier broken tragedy of Chamoli**, indiscriminate blasting during road construction makes cracks in soil and rocks that may enhance the possibility of flash-flood in the future.

Source: IE
