



# SAARC and CICA Meetings

## Why in News

Recently, the Foreign Ministers' meetings of the [South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation](#) (SAARC) and the **Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA)** took place in a virtual manner.

## Key Points

### ▪ India-Pakistan Tussle:

- India called the SAARC countries to collectively resolve to defeat the scourge of **terrorism**, including the forces that nurture, support and encourage an environment of terror and conflict.

- This was a **clear criticism of Pakistan** who has been involved in crossborder terrorism.

- Pakistan also made a detailed statement on the resolution of "long-standing disputes", a veiled reference to Jammu and Kashmir and India's move to [withdraw Article 370](#).

- **Background:**

- Recently, **India said** that the degree of seriousness of each SAARC member-nation in collectively fighting the [Covid-19 pandemic](#) can be gauged by their behaviour. The statement was in clear reference to [Pakistan's opposition to India's leadership](#) in dealing with the crisis in the region.
  - The National Security Advisor of India had walked off from a virtual meeting of the [Shanghai Cooperation Organisation \(SCO\)](#) in September, 2020 after his Pakistani counterpart appeared with a [Pakistani version of its map that included Indian territories](#).
  - In 2019, at the SAARC Foreign Ministers' meeting, Foreign Ministers of India and Pakistan had **boycotted** each other's speeches.
  - The Prime Minister of India had also refused to attend the 19<sup>th</sup> edition of the SAARC summit, due to be held in Islamabad in 2016, over the issue of Pakistan's continued support to terror groups in light of **Uri attacks**.

### ▪ Covid-19: All SAARC nations built a common stand on the need to cooperate in battling the [coronavirus pandemic](#).

- **SAARC initiatives to combat Covid-19:** SAARC Covid-19 Information Exchange Platform (COINEX), SAARC Food Bank mechanism, SAARC Covid-19 Emergency Fund.
- **India's Contribution:** India has contributed 10 million USD to **SAARC Covid-19 Emergency Fund** and manufactured essential drugs, Covid protection and testing kits, for countries in the SAARC region (**Eg. [Operation Sanjeevani](#)** for Maldives).

### ▪ **Relevance of SAARC:** SAARC has not been very effective since 2016 as its biennial summits have not taken place since the last one in Kathmandu (Nepal) in 2014.

- India, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Afghanistan also declined to participate in the Islamabad meet planned in 2016.

- **The reasons for a dysfunctional SAARC:**

- Bilateral issues cannot be discussed in SAARC but since the organisation relies on the **principle of unanimity** for all major decisions, Pakistan has often vetoed the major initiatives proposed at SAARC. For example, **SAARC Motor Vehicle Agreement proposed at Kathmandu summit, 2014.**
- **India-Pakistan** conflict has undermined SAARC. For India, Pakistan's use of terror as an instrument of foreign policy has made normal business impossible.
- **Dispute between Pakistan and Afghanistan** over the Durand line, is also a reason.
- Also, **India's economic position** vis-a vis other SAARC countries, creates an impression of India being a big brother rather than a strategic partner.
- SAARC has become almost marginal to the regions' collective consciousness and other organisations such as the **Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC)** came into the forefront.

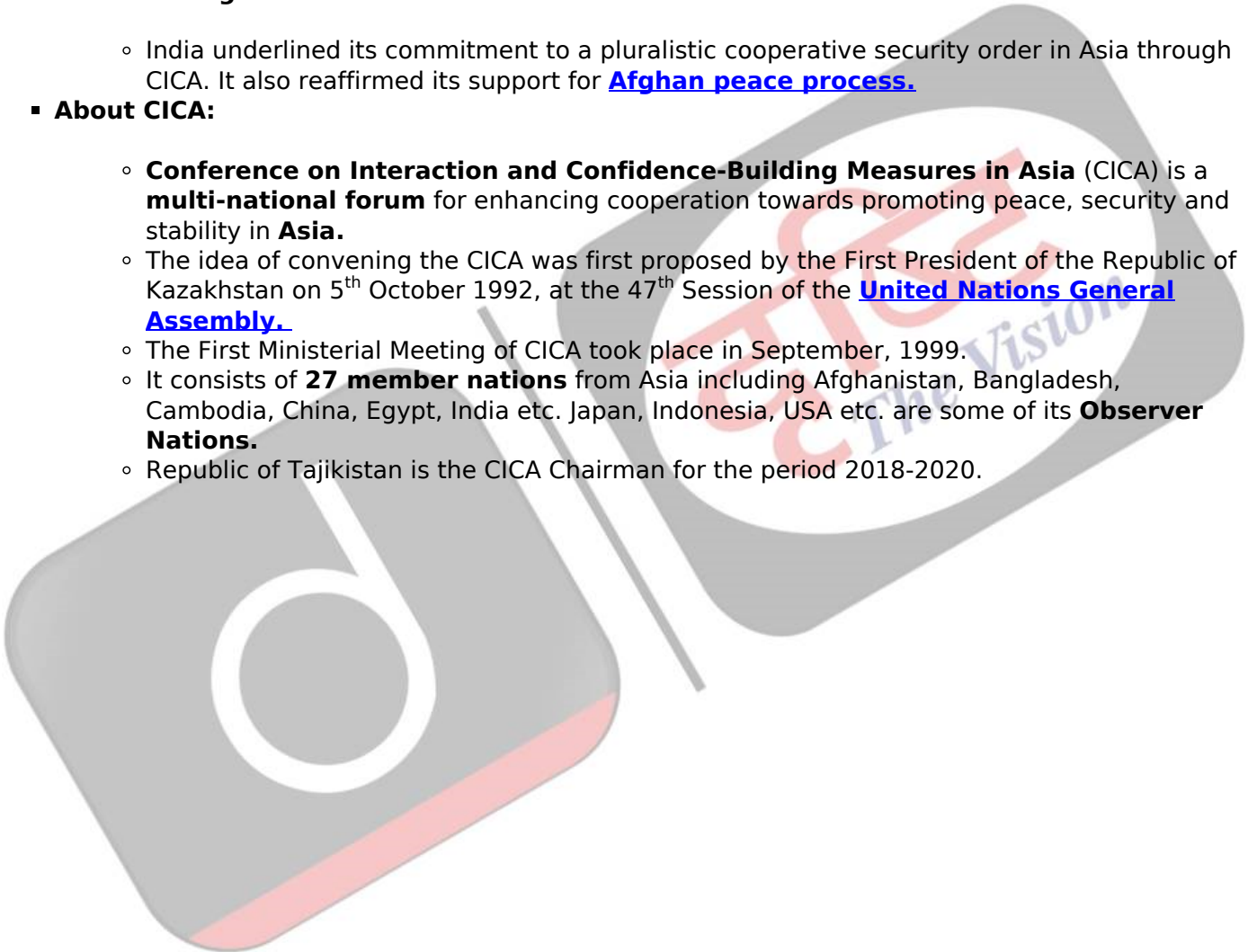
- **CICA Meeting:**

- India underlined its commitment to a pluralistic cooperative security order in Asia through CICA. It also reaffirmed its support for **Afghan peace process.**

- **About CICA:**

- **Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia** (CICA) is a **multi-national forum** for enhancing cooperation towards promoting peace, security and stability in **Asia.**
- The idea of convening the CICA was first proposed by the First President of the Republic of Kazakhstan on 5<sup>th</sup> October 1992, at the 47<sup>th</sup> Session of the **United Nations General Assembly.**
- The First Ministerial Meeting of CICA took place in September, 1999.
- It consists of **27 member nations** from Asia including Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Egypt, India etc. Japan, Indonesia, USA etc. are some of its **Observer Nations.**
- Republic of Tajikistan is the CICA Chairman for the period 2018-2020.

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# Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA)

- A multinational forum for enhancing cooperation towards promoting peace, security and stability in Asia
- Proposed by Nursultan Nazarbayev, Kazakhstan's first president, at the 47th Session of the United Nations General Assembly on **October 5, 1992**

## Member states (27):

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- Afghanistan
  - Azerbaijan
  - Bahrain
  - Bangladesh
  - Cambodia
  - China
  - United Arab Emirates
  - Egypt
  - India
  - Iran
  - Iraq
  - Israel
  - Jordan
  - Uzbekistan
  - Kazakhstan
  - Kyrgyzstan
  - Mongolia
  - Pakistan
  - Palestine
  - Qatar
  - Vietnam
  - Republic of Korea
  - Russian Federation
  - Sri Lanka
  - Tajikistan
  - Thailand
  - Turkey

## Summits:



## Way Forward

- Keeping SAARC in deep-freeze because of Pakistan was not serving anybody's interest. Despite the recent ineffectiveness of SAARC, its revival will facilitate India's **neighbourhood first policy** in meeting the challenge of regional strategic encroachment by China through its **Belt and Road Initiative**.

**Source: IE**

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