

Current Affairs of the Day

PAPER 1:

History:

- 'Overseas support was crucial for Khalistan groups'
- What are the historical events responsible for Khalistan?
- What was the course of Khalistan Movement?
- What are the events which intensified Khalistan movement?

PAPER 2:

International Relations:

- Amid pandemic, India & Pak. spar over Indus water talks
- Mahinda Rajapaksa sworn in as Sri Lankan PM

PAPER 3:

Economy:

- Defence Ministry to impose import embargo on 101 items
- PM launches farm infra scheme

Defence & Security:

- Andaman and Nicobar will be a maritime hub: Modi



Defence Ministry to impose import embargo on 101 items

Key Points:

- The Defence Ministry will “introduce import embargo on 101 items beyond given timeline to **boost indigenization** of defence production.
- The government intends to reach a turnover of \$25 billion through indigenously manufactured defence products and also expects to export products worth \$5 billion.
- Government has also decided that in any government contract over ₹200 crore, no foreign company can participate in the tendering process.
- This year ₹52,000 crore items [are] to be bought only from Indian companies.
- Government will push the Swadeshi movement started by freedom fighters and Mahatma Gandhi during the Independence Movement.

Significance:

- The decision will offer a great opportunity to the Indian defence industry to manufacture the items in the negative list by using their own design and development capabilities or adopting the technologies designed and developed by the Defence Research Development Organisation (DRDO) to meet the requirements of the Armed Forces.
- The list is prepared by MoD after several rounds of consultations with all stakeholders, including the Armed Forces, public & private industry to assess current and future capabilities of the Indian industry for manufacturing various ammunition & equipment within India.
- The list of 101 embargoed items comprises of not just simple parts but also some high technology weapon systems like artillery guns, assault rifles, corvettes, sonar systems, transport aircrafts, LCHs, radars and many other items to fulfil the needs of the defence Services.
- The list also includes wheeled Armored Fighting Vehicles (AFVs) with indicative import embargo date of December 2021, of which the Army is expected to contract almost 200 at an approximate cost of over ₹5,000 crore.



- The embargo on imports is planned to be progressively implemented between 2020 to 2024. Our aim is to apprise the Indian defence industry about the anticipated requirements of the Armed Forces so that they are better prepared to realise the goal of indigenisation. MoD has also bifurcated the capital procurement budget for 2020-21 between domestic and foreign capital procurement routes.

➤ LAC stand-off:

The policy change comes in the wake of Chinese transgressions and the build-up along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Ladakh. China has refused to pull back from several areas, where it has massed troops since May.

PM launches farm infra scheme

Key Points:

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday launched a new financing scheme under the ₹1 lakh crore **Agriculture Infrastructure Fund** meant for setting up storage and processing facilities, which will help farmers get higher prices for their crops, according to the government statement.
- Released the sixth instalment of funds under the PM-KISAN scheme, which amounted to ₹17,000 crore to about 8.5 crore farmers.
- The first ₹1,000 crore was sanctioned on Sunday to over 2,280 farmer societies under the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund, which was approved by the Cabinet a month ago.

Significance:

- The scheme will support farmers, PACS [primary agricultural credit societies], FPOs [farmer producer organisations], agri-entrepreneurs, etc. in building community farming assets and post-harvest agriculture infrastructure.
- These assets will enable farmers to get greater value for their produce as they will be able to store and sell at higher prices, reduce wastage, and increase processing and value addition.



India has a huge opportunity to invest in post-harvest management solutions like warehousing, cold chain, and food processing, and build a global presence in areas such as organic and fortified foods.

‘Overseas support was crucial for Khalistan groups’

- As more and more foreign governments, including the United Kingdom and Canada, refuse support for Khalistani demands of a “Referendum 2020”, a new book sheds light on operations of India’s external intelligence agency, the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), in the face of earlier covert support by these countries for the Khalistani terror networks.
- The book, RAW: A History of India’s Covert Operations by journalist Yatish Yadav, goes into much detail on not just how Khalistani terrorists operated offshore but also how foreign governments turned a blind eye and, in some cases, offered covert support to such groups.

Value Added Information

What are the historical events responsible for Khalistan?

- 1947 Partition of India -Independence of India was not a joyful event for Sikhs, partition left Sikhs in a lot of discontentment with regard to their traditional lands being lost to Pakistan.
- Punjabi Suba movement - A movement was initiated in 1955 under Akali Dal a Sikh dominated political party.
- It seek re-organisation of Punjab along linguist lines, seeking division of the state into Punjabi and non-Punjabi speaking areas.
- However, the division acquired communal overtones, with Sikhs voting for Punjabi as mother-tongue (even if they spoke Hindi) and Hindus voting for Hindi as mother-tongue (even if they spoke Punjabi).
- The State reorganisation commission made its recommendations and it rejected Akali Dals demand which seeks separate statehood.
- The movement resulted in trifurcation of Punjab into Punjab, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh.
- The disputes of Chandigarh and Sharing of waters of Ravi-Beas and Sutlej between the two states, Punjab and Haryana were the foundation on which the Khalistan dispute was created.



What was the course of Khalistan Movement?

- The Khalistan movement is a Sikh nationalist movement that wants to create an independent state for Sikh people, via armed struggle or political, inside the current North-Western Republic of India. Such a state existed in Punjab from 1709 to 1849.
- The idea of Khalistan was an idea first created in 1940s, remained idle but was revived by an NRI seeking a separate homeland for Sikhs.
- In early 1980s, the movement had emerged as a major separatist movement, fed mostly by bias of Indian Government against Punjab in the case of Chandigarh and sharing of Ravi-Beas waters.
- There was intense political rivalry between Congress Party and the Akali Dal, Akali Dal was gradually gaining ground as the political representative of the Sikh community.
- Congress leadership of that time tried to divide the Akalis by propping up diverse groups of people within the Akali Dal.
- Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale led the Khalistan as an extremist movement, he was initially used by Congress to counter Akali Dal but later he was inspired by the Khalistan ideology and turned against Indian government.
- The movement was fed on arms under the patronage of Pakistan's ISI who was seeking revenge for creation of Bangladesh.
- Bhindranwale emerged as the extremist voice of Sikhs, over-ruling the moderate voices of leaders declared himself as the protector and arbiter of Sikh rights and acquired arms.
- Demands for separate nation-hood for Punjab was carried out through violent protests and killings of high profile persons in Indian government.

What are the events which intensified Khalistan movement?

- Operation Blue star was conducted to capture Bhindranwale in Harmandir Sahib Complex, but the operation resulted in a strong anti-India sentiment.
- The then PM Indira Gandhi was seen as an enemy of the Sikhs and two Sikh guards of her killed her in 1984.



- Her killing was followed by wide-spread riots against the Sikhs across India, the genocide of Sikhs across India fuelled more anti-India sentiment.
- From early 1980s to early 1990s, Punjab went through a phase of wide-spread terrorism.
- Manifold extremist groups like the Khalistan Liberation Force, Khalistan Commando Force, Babbar Khalsa and umpteen others gained prominence and roamed around freely across Punjab.
- Sikhs being a patriotic group started to act against the protracted terrorist struggle and chose to side with the Indian nation, the then Punjab Police department succeeded in defeating the movement in 1990s.

What is present status of the movement?

- At the present, Khalistan movement is a dormant movement in India.
- It does not hold much traction in the urban or local populace of Punjab. .
- But the movement gets ideological support from Sikhs living in Canada, UK or USA.

They pump money, ideological support to the struggle, ISI of Pakistan is still pumping money and effort in reviving the movement.

Amid pandemic, India & Pak. spar over Indus water talks

Key Points:

- India has refused a request by Pakistan to hold a meeting on issues around the Indus Water Treaty (IWT) at the Attari checkpost near the India-Pakistan border. In March India had suggested a virtual conference but Pakistan had insisted on a physical meeting.
- The last such meeting between the two countries was in October in Islamabad, and, as per the agreement in the Indus Water Treaty (IWT), a meeting was to be scheduled in India before March 31.
- The practice at the IWT meetings is that they are led by Indus Water Commissioners from both countries and a range of issues on construction of



dams and hydropower projects concerning the Indus river system are discussed.

- However, the COVID-19 pandemic led to the meeting being cancelled and this was followed up by discussions between representatives of the two countries on how discussions could be conducted.

Key points on the table:

- Among the key points on the table was evolving a procedure to solve differences on technical aspects governing the construction of the Ratle run-of-the-river (RoR) project on the Chenab in the Kishtwar district of Jammu and Kashmir.
- India has called for the appointment of a 'neutral' party while Pakistan favours a Court of Arbitration to agree upon a final resolution on the design parameters of this hydropower project.

Indus Water Treaty:

- According to the terms of the IWT, India has the right to build RoR projects on the three 'western' rivers — the Chenab, Jhelum and Indus — provided it does so without substantially impeding water flow in Pakistan downstream.
- Pakistan believes that the project's current design does pose a serious impediment and has told the World Bank that it wants a Court of Arbitration (CoA) set up to decide on the issue.
- India says this is only a technical issue and mutually solvable. It has agreed to a 'neutral party' since a CoA potentially could stall any construction on all Indus projects.
- The IWT has been in existence since 1960, and reached a flash point in the aftermath of the **Uri attacks in 2016** with Prime Minister Narendra Modi declaring that "blood and water couldn't flow together" and India would utilise the full hydropower capacity of its share of the Indus systems.



'Andaman and Nicobar will be a maritime hub: Modi

In news:

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Sunday the Andaman and Nicobar islands region, owing to its strategic importance, was going to be developed as a “maritime and startup hub” and highlighted his government’s development initiatives for it.

High-impact projects

- “The region will play an important role in our government’s self-reliant India project and the growth of new India,” Mr. Modi said highlighting the Andaman archipelago’s significance in the freedom movement.
- 12 islands of the archipelago have been selected for high-impact projects with an emphasis on boosting trade of sea-based, organic and coconut-based products of the region.
- The proposed transshipment hub in the Andamans will help the group of islands become an important centre of blue economy and a maritime and startup hub.

Over 300 km of national highway is expected to be completed in record time, he said, adding his government is working to improve air connectivity within these islands and between them and the rest of the country.

Mahinda Rajapaksa sworn in as Sri Lankan PM

In news:

- Former President Mahinda Rajapaksa on Sunday took the oath of office as Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, following the ruling party’s landslide victory in the August 5 general election. Mr. Rajapaksa, 74, polled a record-breaking share of preferential votes — over five lakh — this election, reflecting his popularity in the electorate 50 years after he first entered Parliament.

Significance:

- The emphatic two-thirds majority to the ruling party in the recent poll, after Mr. Gotabaya Rajapaksa’s big win in November, allows the Rajapaksa brothers to amend the Constitution.



- As part of their poll campaign, the brothers vowed to repeal a 2015 legislation capping presidency at two-terms and trimming the President's executive powers. The ninth Parliament of Sri Lanka will not only see the siblings helm the country's two most powerful offices, but will have among its members, their third and elder brother Chamal Rajapaksa, a former Speaker, his son Shasheendra Rajapaksa and Namal Rajapaksa, son of Mr. Mahinda Rajapaksa and a popular former MP from the southern Hambantota district.

The Tamil question:

- Both the President and Prime Minister have underscored the need for greater development in the country's civil war-affected areas, while the Tamil leadership is also concerned about the minority's long-pending demand for greater political rights.
- In the decade following the long civil war, Sri Lanka's northern Tamils have been demanding a lasting political solution, with a greater measure of power to self-govern. R. Sampanthan, Leader of the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) — which suffered an electoral setback and secured only 10 of its 16 seats this election — said the people of the country had given the government a strong mandate.
- Much work has been done in the past, including the **Indo-Lanka Accord of 1987** and the consequent **13th Amendment** that speaks of power devolution, Mr. Sampanthan said. Discussions on improving the 13th Amendment continued with Presidents R. Premadasa, Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga, Mahinda Rajapaksa in the past, and with the former government of Maithripala Sirisena-Ranil Wickremesinghe.