Approval on Kartarpur Corridor

Why in news?

\n\n

The Cabinet approved the development of a corridor to enable smooth passage of pilgrims seeking to visit Pakistan's Kartarpur Sahib.

\n\n

What is the Kartarpur corridor?

\n\n

\n
- **Kartarpur Sahib** - The gurdwara in Kartarpur stands on the bank of River Ravi, about 120 km northeast of Lahore.
\n
- Kartarpur Sahib is revered as Guru Nanak's final resting place.
\n
- It was here that Guru Nanak assembled a Sikh community and lived for 18 years until his death in 1539.
\n
- **Corridor** - It is a long-standing demand from the Sikh community for easy access to the revered shrine across the border.
\n
- The Kartarpur corridor was first proposed in 1999 when PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee took a bus ride to Lahore.
\n
- It is now conceived as a visa-free corridor for Sikhs from India to Pakistan's Kartarpur Sahib.
\n
- It will be developed from Dera Baba Nanak village in Gurdaspur, Punjab to Gurdwara Darbar Sahib, Kartarpur.
\n
- The length of the corridor is about 4 km, 2 km on either side of the International Border.
\n

\n\n

\n\n

How did the decision come about?

\n\n

\n
- Few months back, Punjab minister Navjot Singh Sidhu attended the swearing-in ceremony of PM Imran Khan in Pakistan.
\n
- Pakistan’s Army Chief General had then told Sidhu that Pakistan hoped to build the corridor.
\n
- But the Indian government refused to respond to this informal proposal.
\n

\n\n

\n
- However, the Punjab government moved a resolution in the Punjab Assembly.
\n
- It adopted unanimously, seeking an uninterrupted corridor from Dera Baba Nanak to Kartarpur Sahib.
\n
- Indian government has now announced that it would develop a corridor up to the International Border.
\n
- The government also asked Pakistan to develop a corridor with suitable facilities in its territory.
\n
- It comes at the time of the start of 550th birth anniversary year of Guru Nanak.
\n
- The Pakistan government responded that it has already decided to open the corridor for the anniversary.
\n

\n\n

What is India's rationale?

\n\n

\n
- The announcements were a coordinated step by the two countries, despite the big chill in the relationship.
\n

- India decided to go ahead because it did not want to be upstaged by Pakistan, which proposed it first.
  \n
- This is despite the misgivings in the security establishment with the Kartarpur corridor.
  \n
- As, it may be another attempt by Pakistan to woo the Sikh community, aimed eventually at creating unrest in Punjab.
  \n
- India could not be seen denying its Sikh community what Pakistan was ready to roll out for it.
  \n
- In all, the corridor is seen to be a big leap forward for people-to-people relations.
  \n
- It will facilitate easier access and smooth passage of Indian pilgrims throughout the year.
  \n

\n\n

What next?

\n\n

  \n
- Pilgrimages between India and Pakistan are governed by the 1974 Protocol on Visits to Religious Shrines.
  \n
- It includes a list of shrines in Pakistan and India open for visitors from the other country, and for which visas are required.
  \n
- The Kartarpur Corridor, which will provide visa-free access from India to the shrine inside Pakistan, may need a separate treaty.
  \n
- Also, officials from India and Pakistan will meet soon to discuss the logistics of the corridor and point of border crossing.
  \n

\n\n

\n\n

Source: Indian Express, The Hindu

\n



SHANKAR
IAS PARLIAMENT
Information is Empowering