Cancellation of Kartarpur Corridor Talks - India-Pakistan

Why in news?

The second round of talks between India and Pakistan on Kartarpur corridor was cancelled as India called it off. Click here to know more on the corridor.

What is the corridor for?

- India and Pakistan agreed in 2018 to set up a border crossing.
- It was to link Gurudwara Darbar Sahib in Kartarpur to the Dera Baba Nanak shrine in India's Gurdaspur district.
- Gurudwara Darbar Sahib is the final resting place of Sikh faith's founder Guru Nanak Dev.
- Kartarpur Sahib is located in Pakistan's Narowal district across the river Ravi, about 4 km from the Dera Baba Nanak shrine.



Why was the talk cancelled?

- **Differences** - The first round of talks took place in the shadow of the Pulwama terror attack.
- It had revealed divergences between the two sides on all aspects of the pilgrimage corridor, which included -
    i. number of pilgrims to be accommodated
    ii. the security restrictions
    iii. documentation
    iv. mode of transport to be used by pilgrims
- Moreover, Pakistan PM Imran Khan's administration feels it should be given more credit for having cleared the Kartarpur proposal.
- It's because Indian Sikh pilgrims have demanded it ever since the Radcliffe Line left the sacred shrine on the other side of the border.
- But New Delhi refuses to acknowledge this demand.
- India has made it clear the corridor will have no connection with furthering bilateral talks on other issues.
- **Attacks** - At the base of the differences is the deep distrust between the two governments.
- Especially, the gulf has deepened in the aftermath of the Pulwama attack and

the Balakot strike.

- **Security** - Security agencies have cautioned of Pakistan's military establishment using the corridor to fuel separatist Khalistani sentiment.
- [Khalistan movement is a Sikh separatist movement seeking to create a separate country called Khalistan in Punjab, as a homeland for Sikhs.]
- Reportedly, the Pakistani Cabinet constituted a ten-member Pakistan Sikh Gurdwara Prabandhak Committee (PSGPC).
- This is to facilitate Sikh pilgrims after opening of Kartarpur Corridor.
- Worryingly, the team is said to be formed with some known pro-Khalistan leaders within the Sikh community.
- The Ministry of External Affairs summoned Pakistan's Deputy High Commissioner, seeking clarifications on the "controversial elements" on the committee.
- However, Pakistan did not name the members of the committee.
- Indian government's decision now to postpone the next round of technical talks is driven mainly by these concerns.
- India said the next meeting would only be held after it receives Pakistan's response.

What could have been done?

- The cancellation of the talks reflects the distrust between the two countries.
- Pakistan's support to separatist Sikh groups goes back several decades, for which India must work to secure its border from the threat.
- But alongside, India should have opened the gates for thousands of pilgrims to travel to Pakistan.
- Modalities and technical issues, such as on the numbers, eligibility and identity proof required, should be resolved by both governments.
- Putting off meetings is hardly a constructive solution, given the proposed opening of the corridor by November to mark the 550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak.

Source: Indian Express, The Hindu

SHANKAR IAS PARLIAMENT
Information is Empowering