Conviction of Hafiz Saeed

Why in news?

Hafiz Saeed, a UN-designated terrorist was convicted on terror finance charges by a Pakistan anti-terrorism court.

What does this conviction show?

- The conviction of Hafiz Saeed shows that Pakistan can be forced to act against terror networks under international pressure.
- He is blamed by India and the U.S. for the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks.
- Saeed, in jail since July 2019, was convicted in another case of terror financing in February 2020.
- He is currently serving two sentences of five and a half years each.
- Repeated convictions in terror financing cases underscore the concerns India and the U.S. have about his operations.

What did he do?

- He first founded the LeT in the 1990s targeting India.
- When the terror group came under international pressure, he revived the JuD, supposedly an Islamic charity, in 2002.
- Now, the Anti-Terrorism Department accused the JuD of financing terrorism from its fund collections in the name of charity through NGOs.

What did Pakistan do?

- Even after the Mumbai attack, Pakistan refused to act against Saeed and his networks.
- The U.S. declared a bounty on Saeed's head and the UN proscribed his organisations.
- Also, Pakistan was facing pressure from the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), a global dirty money watchdog.
- Only after all these pressure, Pakistan banned Saeed's organisations.
- The latest conviction comes after the FATF urged Pakistan to complete an internationally agreed action plan to fight terror financing.

Why Pakistan is taking actions against Saeed?

- In 2018, just before a meeting of the FATF, Pakistan endorsed a UN list of terrorist organisations operating in the country.
- It enforced a nationwide ban on them, including the LeT and the JuD.
- But the FATF still placed Pakistan on its "grey list" in 2018.
- It demanded more actions from Pakistan to avoid being blacklisted, which could invite economic sanctions.
- Ever since, Pakistan, which cannot afford to be blacklisted, has moved against Saeed.

What are the doubts?

- There is question whether these are genuine attempts to fight terrorism or half-hearted measures to dodge international pressure.
- There are doubts because Pakistan had used anti-India and anti-Afghan terrorist networks for strategic advantages.
- It was this dual policy of fighting terror at home while nurturing terror groups that target its rivals abroad that has been responsible for Pakistan's predicament.

What should Pakistan do?

- If Pakistan is serious about fighting terrorism, it should crack down on terror financing and terror infrastructure.
- The international community and organisations, including the FATF, should keep up the pressure until Islamabad shows tangible outcomes.

Source: The Hindu

Quick Fact

Financial Action Task Force (FATF)

- Headquartered in Paris, the FATF was set up by the G7 countries (1989).
- **Objective** - FATF acts as an international watchdog on issues of money laundering and financing of terrorism.
- It is empowered to curtail financing of UN-designated terrorist groups.
- It is to limit the concerned countries from sourcing financial flows internationally and thereby constraining them economically.
- **Members** - FATF has 39 members, which comprise 37 member jurisdictions and 2 regional organisations.
- India became a full member in 2010.



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