Iran’s Criticism of India

Why in News?

Iran criticised India on the Delhi riots saying that there is organized violence prevailing against Indian Muslims in India.

How did India react?

- India summoned the Iranian Ambassador and lodged a strong protest.
- Previously, Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei criticised India for the violence against Muslims in India.
- He said that the Indian government should stop the extremism in order to prevent India’s isolation from the world of Islam.
- There were two other occasions (in 1992 and 2002) when Iran’s response to events in India is worth recalling.

What is the 1992 occasion?

- After the **Babri Masjid** was demolished in 1992, the Iranian Supreme Leader Khamenei said that the mosque’s destruction wasn’t a local issue.
- Indian Ambassador to Iran articulated the Indian government’s position by saying that the mosque will be rebuilt.
- To this articulation, the Iranian side had expressed satisfaction.
- In 1994, Iran came to India’s rescue at the Human Rights Commission of the UN by blocking a consensus on Kashmir.
- But later, it accused India of reneging on its promise to let a delegation of Organisation of Islamic Conference ambassadors into Kashmir.
- In 1994, when the then secretary of Iran’s Supreme National Security Council visited India; he spoke of the treatment of minorities in the wake of the mosque demolition.
- His comments were followed by the cancellation of a visit by Iranian President to India.
- In 1995, relations improved again and their President arrived in India.

What is the 2002 occasion?

- The next test of the relationship came during the 2002 **Gujarat riots**.
- Iranian government conveyed its concerns to the Indian government.
- While they did convey their concerns, they also told that they did not wish to

get into India’s internal affairs.
- The then President of Iran Mohd Khatami visited India as the Chief Guest at the 2003 Republic Day Parade, but did not raise Gujarat issue.

Why 2020 is different?

- The intensity of Khamenei’s words is what that possibly sets apart Iran’s reaction now from that on previous occasions.
- While speaking about Indian Muslims on the said occasions, he has often raised the Kashmir issue.
- Most recently, he raised the Kashmir issue after the revocation of Kashmir’s special status in August 2019.
- He wanted the Indian government to adopt a just policy towards the people of Kashmir and prevent the oppression of Muslims in this region.

What is the context today?

- Iran has been upset over India’s decision to stop buying its oil, under threat of sanctions from the US.
- China has become Iran’s biggest economic partner, and China’s influence is visible in its foreign policy actions.
- Iran knows that India needs Iran for access to Afghanistan and Central Asia through the strategically-located Chabahar port.
- While it has got a waiver for Chabahar, Iran may want India to negotiate with the US for more India-specific waivers on the energy front.
- After the recent US-Taliban agreement, Iran is aware of its importance in New Delhi’s calculus.
- Iran knows India needs Iran on its side as the influence of Taliban and the Pakistan military is on the rise in Afghanistan.
- Iran is also positioning to play the leadership role in the Islamic world, with Saudi Arabia and the UAE perceived to be close to the US.

What message does Iran deliver?

- From a country that has sought to improve ties with India since the 1990s, Iran’s latest statements are a strong signal.
- The Delhi violence has clearly tainted the Indian government’s secular image in the Islamic world.
- The remarks by Iran in particular and some other Muslim-majority countries will be seen as a weakening of India’s diplomatic clout.
- India will have to work on relationships with all these countries, else risk losing its hard-earned diplomatic gains.

Source: The Indian Express

