Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict

Why in news?

The European Union lawmakers has urged the bloc to impose sanctions on Azerbaijan for carrying ethnic cleansing against Armenian residents of Nagorno-Karabakh region.

Where is Nagorno-Karabakh located ?

- **Location-** Nagorno-Karabakh is a landlocked, mountainous and forested region falling within the boundaries of *Azerbaijan*.
- It is located in the South Caucasus region, which straddles the border between Eastern Europe and western Asia.
    - It is roughly made up of modern-day Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia.
- **Predominant population**-Nagorno-Karabakh, called Artsakh in Armenian, hosts a predominantly ethnic *Armenian population* (1.2 Lakh) having close cultural, social, and historical ties with Armenia.
- The conclave is connected to Armenia through the 5-km *Lachin Corridor.*
- **Religion**- The Armenians are *Christians*, while Azeris are *Muslims.*
- **Places** - The capital of Nagorno-Karabakh is *Stepanakert*, with *Susha* being another major city in the region.

What is the conflict about?

- The conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh is called one of the "*frozen conflicts*" of the world.
- **1921** - When Czarist Russia gave way to the Soviet Union in 1921, Nagorno-Karabakh was part of the Azerbaijan SSR (Soviet Socialist Republic).
- **1988** - Nagorno-Karabakh legislature passed a resolution declaring its *intention to join Armenia*, despite being geographically located within Azerbaijan.
- **1991-** With the collapse of Soviet Union in 1991, Armenia and Azerbaijan achieved statehood while Nagorno-Karabakh officially declared independence.
- **1993 -** War broke between two countries, Armenia had captured Nagorno-Karabakh region and it additionally occupied 20% of the Azerbaijan's geographical area.
- **1994 - *Bishkek protocol*** (a ceasefire) was *brokered by Russia* making Nagorno-Karabakh de facto independent with a self-proclaimed government in Stepanakert, but still it relied on Armenia.
- **2020** - Both countries went to war again and Azerbaijan managed to seize control of the territory around Nagorno-Karabakh.
- **2022-** The Lachin Corridor was blockaded by Azerbaijan, causing severe shortages of essential goods including food, fuel and water in Nagorno-Karabakh.
- After an agreement to reopen the Lachin Corridor for aid deliveries sparked hopes of

easing the crisis, Azerbaijan launched an anti-terrorist offensive in Nagorno-Karabakh and claimed to have regained full control over the region.
- **2023** - Almost all of the 1,20,000 ethnic Armenian population has fled the breakaway region since Azerbaijan seized it back in a lightning offensive.

What is India's stand on the conflict?

- **Diplomacy-** Post 2020 conflict, India believes that any lasting resolution of the conflict can only be achieved peacefully through diplomatic negotiations.
- **Peaceful resolution-** India supports the ***OSCE Minsk Group's*** continued efforts for a peaceful resolution of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Peaceful resolution	About
The package deal (1997)	It envisaged simultaneous removal of Armenian forces from occupied areas and the determination of Nagorno-Karabakh's status but was rejected.
The step-by-step approach (1997)	It suggested gradual steps starting with Armenian withdrawal, return of displaced refugees, and ending of hostilities followed by talks for a future resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh issue which was rejected too.
The common state proposal (1998)	It would endow Nagorno-Karabakh with a separate passport, law enforcement and currency, but within Azerbaijan's internationally recognised borders.

- **2023 conflict**- India encouraged the parties to move forward on ensuring long-term peace and security in the region through dialogue and diplomacy.

- **Strategic ties-** The geographical location of the countries make the region a viable corridor for connecting with Russia and Europe through Central Asia and Iran.
- Armenia and Azerbaijan are members of the *International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC),* which India is keen to develop.
    - India supports Armenia's proposal to include Iran's Chabahar port in INSTC.
- The tensions in the region directly impact India's plans to bypass Pakistan as the gateway to Europe and Russia.

India-Armenia Ties
• **Historical relation -** Indian settlements in Armenia were established by two princes (Krishna and Ganesh escaping from Kannauj) in 149 BC. • Emperor Akbar, who is believed to have an Armenian wife Mariam Zamani Begum, granted Armenian traders privileges and considerable religious freedom. • Today, the Armenian community is mainly settled in Kolkata. • **Diplomatic relations** - With Armenia, India opened its embassy in 1999, has a treaty relationship, and has received as many as 3 Heads of State. There have been 2 visits from India at the level of Vice President. • **Political relations**- Armenia publicly endorses India's position on the resolution of the Kashmir issue on a bilateral basis and supports India's aspiration for a permanent seat in the expanded UN Security Council. • **Defence ties**- In 2022, the India signed a deal to supply Armenian with PINAKA multi-barrel rocket launchers, anti-tank munitions, and ammunitions worth US 250 million dollars.

India Azerbaijan Ties
• **Historical ties**-The 'Ateshgah' fire temple in the vicinity of Baku is an 18th-century monument that has wall inscriptions in Devanagari and Gurmukhi. • Silk route is a surviving proof of the hospitality that Indian merchants to Europe enjoyed in Azerbaijani cities such as Baku and Ganja. • **Diplomatic relations** -After the collapse of the Soviet Union, India recognised the independence of Azerbaijan and established diplomatic relations. • However, Azerbaijan's proximity to Pakistan has been perceived as an irritant in the ties and there has not been a single visit at the level of the Head of State/ Government between the two countries.

What about the global response?

- Former International Criminal Court Chief Prosecutor warned that there was a reasonable basis to believe Azerbaijan was committing a genocide in Nagorno-Karabakh region using starvation as "invisible genocide weapon".
- The European Parliament approved a resolution saying it considers that the current situation amounts to ethnic cleansing and strongly condemns threats and violence committed by Azerbaijan troops.
- The lawmakers called on EU's 27 member states to adopt targeted sanctions against individuals in the Azerbaijani government over the assault and alleged human right violations in Nagorno-Karabakh.

References

1. Indian Express-Nagorno-Karabakh conflict history
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