# Notes on V.K. Krishna Menon

## Why in news?

Biography of V.K. Krishna Menon written by Member of Parliament Jairam Ramesh released recently.

## Who is V.K. Krishna Menon?

- V.K. Krishna Menon was an Indian nationalist, diplomat, and politician, described by some as the second most powerful man in India, after his ally, the 1st Prime Minister of India, Jawaharlal Nehru.
- Noted for his eloquence, brilliance, and forceful, highly abrasive personality, Menon inspired widespread adulation and fervent detraction in both India and the West.
- He was an unapologetic champion of India in the face of Western imperialism, who famously "taught the white man his place".
- Decades after his death, Menon remains an enigmatic and controversial figure.

## What are the great contributions of V.K. Krishna Menon?

- As a young man, Menon led the overseas wing of the Indian independence movement, launching the India League in London.
- He aggressively campaigning within the United Kingdom to win public support for Indian independence, and rallying the support of such superpowers as the Soviet Union.
- In the immediate wake of independence, Menon emerged as engineer of and spokesman for India's foreign policy, and, more generally, architect of the non-aligned movement.
- He headed India's diplomatic missions to the United Kingdom and the United Nations, and distinguished himself in diplomatic matters including the Suez crisis.
- In 1957, Menon set the record for the longest speech(8 hours) before the U.N. Security Council while defending India's rights to the disputed territory of Kashmir, in the process earning widespread popularity and the sobriquet "Hero of Kashmir".
- Returning to India, he was repeatedly elected to both houses of the Indian

parliament from constituencies as varied as Mumbai, Bengal, and Trivandrum in his native state of Kerala.
- Initially he served as a minister without portfolio, and later as Minister of Defence, overseeing the modernization of the Indian military and development of the Indian military-industrial complex, and spearheading the Indian annexation of Goa.
- He resigned in the wake of the Sino-Indian War, following allegations of India's military unpreparedness, but remained counselor to Nehru, member of parliament and elder statesman until his death

## What are the controversies on V.K. Krishnan Menon?

- **Strong Communist -** Though V.K.K Menon was Nehru's Man, he was strongly rooted to the ideology of communism.
- In 1962, C. Rajagopalachari had said, 'If Mr. Menon succeeds, it would be one point to Indian Communists and two points to world Communists.'
- J.P Kripalani who was candidate against V.K.K Menon in LS election dramatically announced that he would withdraw from the contest if Krishna Menon openly condemned the Communist Party and declared that he was not a communist.
- **Weak Defence Minister -** On 15 July 1962, Krishna Menon wrote to Nehru that he was planning to leave for Geneva.
- The Prime Minister replied the next day: "…I suppose you have to go to Geneva for the Laos Conference, although the Ladakh situation would indicate your staying on here. I see that the Chinese Foreign Minister is also going to Geneva… The sooner you come back the better…"
- Krishna Menon met with the Chinese foreign minister in Geneva on 22 and 23 July 1962.
- Krishna Menon came back to India on 25 July 1962 but maintained a silence on what had transpired at Geneva, He briefed the cabinet six days later.
- Meanwhile, on 25 July 1962, Atal Bihari Vajpayee had written to Nehru saying that the frequent absence of the defence minister during a time when India faced a crisis on its borders with China in Ladakh was very unjustifiable.
- That very day Nehru replied to Atal Bihari Vajpayee, then a member of the Rajya Sabha, saying that he saw nothing wrong in Krishna Menon going abroad for five days, particularly to attend the last stages of the Laos conference 'in which we have been engaged and have played an important part'.
- He assured Vajpayee that the Ladakh matter was now under the defence

chiefs

- Three months later on 20th October 1962, China attacked India, and India suffered a humiliating defeat in the war.
- The price that Nehru had to pay to pacify his own party colleagues and to get immediate military assistance from the U.S., the U.K. and Canada would be to accept Krishna Menon’s resignation as defence minister.

**Source: The Hindu**

