

## India-Pakistan Disaster Diplomacy

### Why in news?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed his condolences and hoped for an early restoration of normalcy in flood ravaged Pakistan.

### What is the current Pakistan flood about?

- The flood has devastated the regions of Sindh and Baluchistan (Western half of Pakistan) badly, although Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa too have been affected.
- Pakistan's National Disaster Management Authority claimed that about 15% of the country's population had been affected by the floods.
- More than 3,500 people have been injured, and there are massive shortages of wheat and fuel.
- Preliminary estimates suggest a third of the country's cultivated land have been inundated.
- About 2 million homes will have to be rebuilt from scratch.

To know more about the Pakistan floods, click [here](#)

### How is the current Indo-Pak relation?

- **Promise of a new beginning-** The Prime Minister's statement came as a surprise, given the steady deterioration of India's relationship with Pakistan over the last 8 years.
- Modi's swearing-in ceremony had been attended by Pakistan's then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in May 2014 along with the leaders of other SAARC nations.
- The meeting between the two Prime Ministers had held the promise of a new beginning for the bilateral relationship that had suffered a severe setback after the 26/11 terrorist attacks in Mumbai in 2008.
- Track two diplomacy between the neighbours had seen the opening of the Kartarpur corridor in 2019 that allows visa free access for Indian pilgrims to Gurudwara Darbar Sahib in Pakistan.
- **Deteriorated ties-** India's red line on the meeting between Pakistan's diplomats and leaders of the separatist Hurriyat, the terrorist attacks in Pathankot and Uri, etc. impacted the relationship negatively.
- Ties have been hit further after the Pulwama terror attack in 2019, and the abrogation of Article 370.
- There are no full-time High Commissioners in either country now.
- **Positive noises-** After the ouster of Imran Khan, the new PM Shehbaz Sharif has given the scope for addressing the Kashmir issue.
- Mr. Modi congratulated the new leader of Pakistan, and said that India desired peace

and stability in a region free of terrorism.

*Talks and terror can't go together.*

### **How about the two countries in responding to disasters?**

- In 2001, after the earthquake hit Bhuj in Gujarat, Pakistan had reached out with help, and had sent tents and blankets for the survivors.
- During 2005 earthquake, India sent aircraft with relief supplies to Pakistan and pledged 25 million dollars through the United Nations (UN) to support Pakistan's relief efforts.
- During 2010 superflood hit Pakistan, India offered 5 million dollars in help, but Islamabad declined to accept it.

### **What is the case for help now?**

- The Indian Prime Minister's outreach by way of a message created a potential opening for "**disaster diplomacy**".
- The case for extending humanitarian help ties with its desire to project itself as the "**first responder**" in times of crisis in the neighbourhood.
- Vaccine diplomacy and the efforts to brand India as the "**pharmacy to the world**" have been billed as major achievements of the government.
- Recently, India has extended its hand of help and cooperation to the Maldives, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Nepal, Bhutan, and Afghanistan.
- Trucks filled with Indian grain have travelled to Taliban-ruled Afghanistan via Pakistan.
- However, it is believed that the government's stated policy of "talks and terror can't go together" and the extending of help to Pakistan are at odds with each other.

### **References**

1. <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-global/pak-floods-indian-respons-e-8139762/>
2. <https://www.timesnownews.com/exclusive/india-pakistan-pms-share-messages-over-floods-despite-polite-exchanges-its-unlikely-india-pak-ties-will-witness-a-thaw-article-93920832>