

## 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**

