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General Studies

Paper 2 – Volume 2

International Relations



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INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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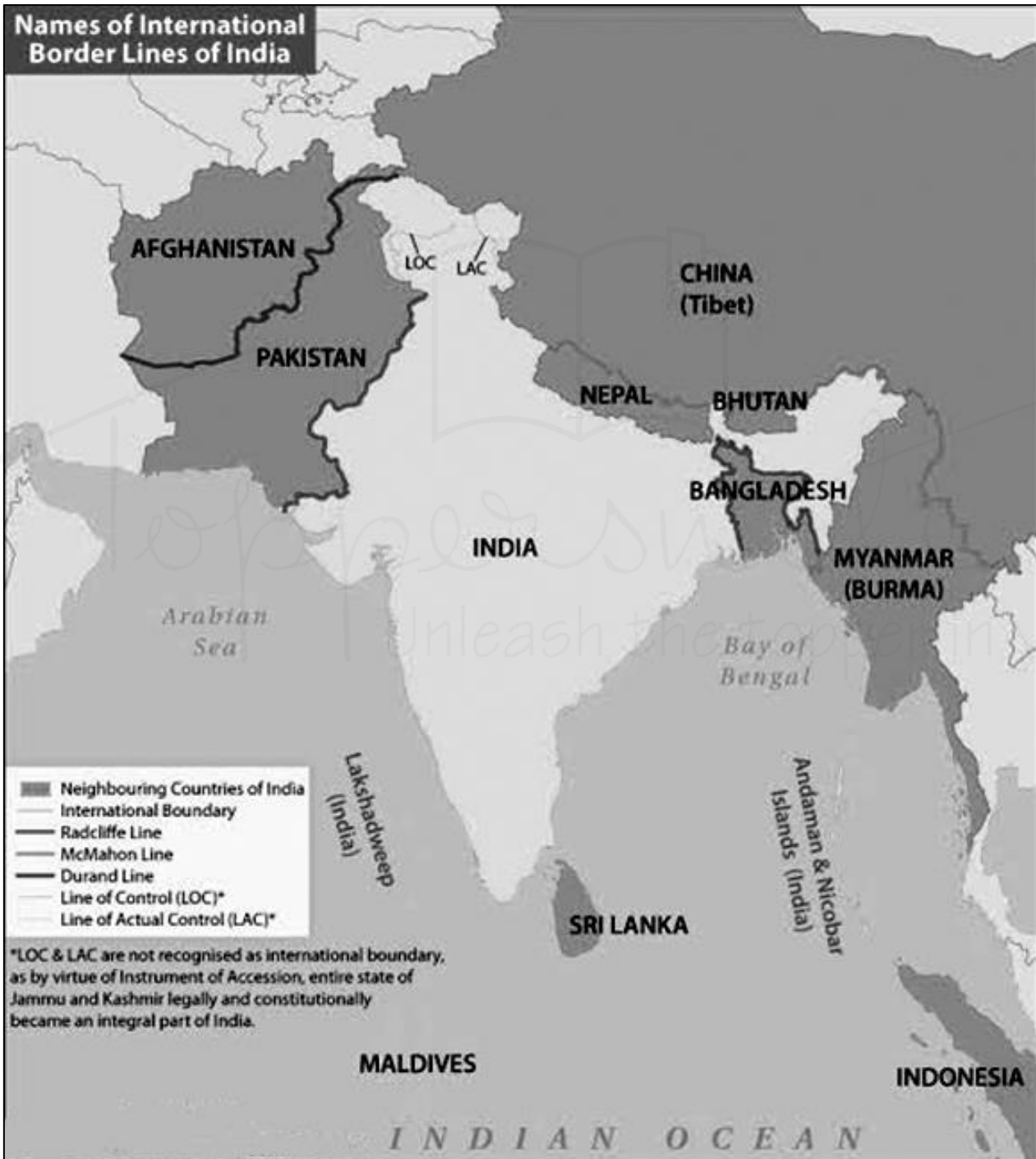
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CHAPTER

India and its neighbourhood



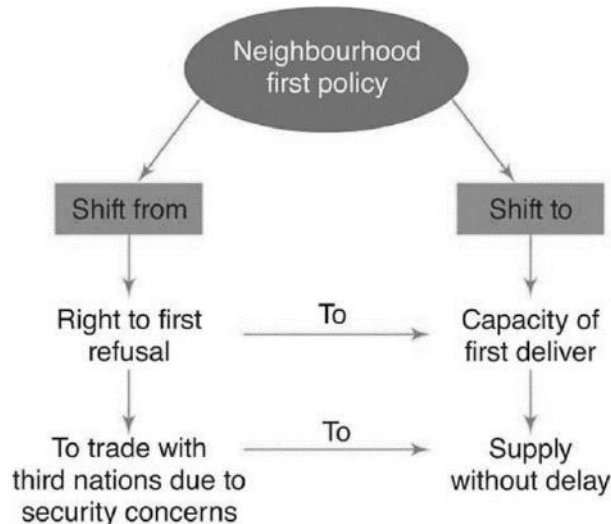
- **India's Neighbours:** Pakistan, Afghanistan, China, Bhutan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Myanmar
 - **Maritime Neighbours:** Sri Lanka and Maldives
- **India's Policy Vision:** To promote **South Asian peace and cooperation** with an emphasis on promoting trade, connectivity, and people-to-people contact.

Neighbourhood First Policy



Ideology behind Neighbourhood First policy

- India should **shape rather than react** to events in its neighbourhood.
 - **consistent with India's** desire to **play a significant role** in international affairs.
- Take **more responsibility in region** via economic collaboration in mutually beneficial areas.
 - Wishes to follow a **well-defined paradigm for foreign policy**.
- At the heart is **India's economic diplomacy strategy** to put country's neighbours 1st.
- **Salient features:**
 - **Immediate priority to neighbours:** To ensure peace and tranquilly in South Asia for achieving development plan.
 - **Regional diplomacy:** Strong emphasis on engaging with neighbouring countries and forging political ties through conversation.
 - **Resolving bilateral issues:** Finding **mutually acceptable solutions** to bilateral concerns. **Eg.** India-Bangladesh inked Land Boundary Agreement (LBA).
 - **Connectivity:** **India signed a MoU with members of SAARC** to ensure free movt. of resources, energy, goods, labour, and information across national borders.
 - **Economic cooperation:** to **strengthen trade ties**. **SAARC benefited** from **India's participation** and investment as a mechanism for regional development. BBIN grouping for energy development, which includes motor vehicles, waterpower management, and inter-grid connectivity.
 - **Technical coop.:** **SAARC satellite** launched to share benefits of technology, such as **telemedicine and e-learning**, with people all over South Asia.
 - **Disaster management:** **India offers** disaster response, resource management, weather forecasting, and **expertise to all South Asian citizens**. India provided enormous aid in the aftermath of 2016 earthquake in Nepal.
 - **Defence coop.:** **India enhancing regional security** through exercises like **Surya Kiran, Nepal and Sampriti, Bangladesh** aimed at strengthening defence ties.
 - **Aid to Neighbours:** **goodwill gesture** in sync with value of daan or 'charity'.
 - **Technical assistance** to neighbours like **Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bhutan**.
 - **Human Resource related training** under non-planned grants.
 - **ITEC scholarships and line of credits** as a tool of development diplomacy



Challenges with Neighbourhood First Policy

- **Nepal:** alleges that
 - **India interfered** in internal affairs.
 - **India publicly stated its dissatisfaction** with Nepal's constitution.
 - **India resorted to a blockade**, Nepal compelled to complain to UN.
 - **India used R&AW to topple** the Oli **government**.
- **Sri Lanka:** allegations that **then-R&AW station chief for Sri Lanka, K Elango, intended to topple the Rajapakse govt.**
- **Maldives:** allegations that **India has been overenthusiastic** and displayed inappropriate behaviour when Nasheed arrested.
- **Pakistan: Greatest diplomatic and security dilemma.** India's difficulty is to manage ties with a state that openly uses terror as a tool of state policy and has many power centres.
- **Afghanistan:** recent **takeover by Taliban jeopardizes all developmental efforts undertaken by India in Afghanistan.**
- **China: expanding its footprint in the Indian subcontinent.** Construction of **Gwadar port, strings of pearls theory, OBOR initiative** has sparked scepticism in the relationship. CPEC runs through POK.
- **Bangladesh:** Unresolved issues like **Teesta river water, Issue of illegal migration** etc



Way forward

- **Diplomacy:** India should resort to **patient diplomacy** rather than **displaying arrogance**
- **Connectivity:** Should lead in **establishing cross-border transportation & communication ties.**
- **Capacity development:** by **recruiting more foreign diplomats and bureaucrats**
- **Soft power:** India's shared culture offer an **opportunity to deepen its roots in region**
- **Economic Development:** **collaborate with neighbours to expand their markets and improve their infrastructure.** Emphasis must be on **sustainable and inclusive development.**

India-Afghanistan

- Officially the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. Capital: Kabul
- landlocked country located at the crossroads of Central and South Asia.
- Neighbours: Pakistan to east and south (including a short border with Pakistani-controlled Gilgit–Baltistan, a territory claimed by India), Iran to the west, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to the north, and Tajikistan and China to the northeast.
- Area: 652,864 sq km, predominantly mountainous with plains in north & southwest separated by Hindukush mountain range.



Historical relations

- **Ancient: Relations existed since Indus Valley Civilization.**
 - One of Alexander's successors, **Seleucus Nicator**, controlled most of Afghanistan before ceding it to **Mauryan Empire** in 305 BC as part of an alliance treaty.
- **Medieval:**
 - **10th-mid 18th century: Invasions** in northern regions of India by a number of invaders such as **Ghaznavids, Ghurids, Khaljis, Suris, Mughals, and Durranis.**
 - **Mughal period** : Afghans came to India due to **political instability** in their regions.
- **Modern:**
 - **Khan Abdul Ghaffar Khan** - prominent leaders of the **Indian independence movement** and active supporters of INC.
- **Post independence: India** - only South Asian country to recognize **Soviet-backed Democratic Republic of Afghanistan** in 1980s, though relations diminished during 1990s Afghan civil war and Taliban govt.
 - **Aided overthrow of Taliban**
- **Strategic Partnership Agreement: Signed in October 2011.**
 - **Objective:** To rebuild Afghanistan's infrastructure and institutions.



- Provide Education and technical assistance to rebuild indigenous Afghan capacity
- Encouraging investment in Afghanistan's natural resources.
- Providing Afghanistan's exports duty-free access to the Indian market.
- India - 5th largest donor to Afghanistan and largest regional donor.
- India shifted focus from security-centric approach, to regional confidence building.

Afghanistan and Taliban

- Taliban emerged in early 1990s after withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan.
- Ruled Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001 but gross misgovernance led to US invasion.
- Since US and its allies invaded Afghanistan on the premise of killing Osama Bin Laden, the Taliban has been battling to reclaim control.
- Recently, US-Taliban Peace Deal, Withdrawal of foreign forces + Release of prisoners + Recognition of Taliban etc.
- After US withdrew, Taliban took control of Afghanistan.

Northern alliance

- aka Afghan Northern Alliance/ United Islamic Front.
- A united military front formed in late 1996 after Taliban took over Kabul.
 - support from Iran, Russia, Turkey, India, USA etc.
- US Entry in Afghanistan. Provided support to Northern Alliance troops on the ground in a 2-month war against Taliban, which they won in December 2001.
- Taliban forced out from control of country. later Northern Alliance dissolved as members and parties joined the new establishment of the Karzai administration.

Areas of cooperation India Afghanistan

Cultural Relations

- Afghanistan = an important trading and craft center for over 2000 years connecting civilizations of Persia, Central Asia with India.
- Scholarships Programme: Reconstruction and renovation of Habibia School in Kabul.
 - India offers 500 ITEC slots to Afghanistan annually.
 - Areas of cooperation Special Scholarship Scheme of 1000 scholarships per annum to Afghan Nationals.



Political Relations

- 2011: Strategic Partnership Agreement signed strengthening Indo-Afghan relations.
- New chancery complex in Kabul: New embassy of India.

Economic Relations

- Infrastructure: Constructed with Indian aid
 - Afghan-India Friendship Dam (Salma Dam) in Herat region on Harirud river
 - Afghan Parliament
 - Zaranj-Delaram Highway (218 Km long; constructed by BRO) along Afghan-Iran border
 - Power Infrastructure: 220kV DC transmission line from Pul-e-Khumri to north of Kabul.



- **Connectivity:**

- **Direct Air Freight Corridor.**
- **Chabahar Port:** Sistan-Baluchistan province, Iran. To **enhance sea-land connectivity** with Afghanistan and the **Central Asian Region.**
- **TAPI:** Launched in **2016.** Aimed to **carry 33 billion cubic meters of natural gas each year.** Pipeline moves from **Turkmenistan to India** via Afghanistan and Pakistan.
- **INSTC:** trade corridor project to **connect Russia, Europe & Eurasia** with India via Iran.
 - **India-backed Chabahar Port with INSTC for connectivity to Central Asia**

Wakhan Corridor

- **Corridor of Afghanistan and Xinjiang Province of China, geo-strategically significant for India.**
- Area at the tip of Wakhan Corridor is evolving into a key crossroad for CPEC.
- **India's Concern:**
 - **Presence of China through CPEC** will affect territorial integrity of India.
 - **Terrorism in J&K** will escalate.
 - **China plan to convert corridor into curious case of 'Corridor of Power or Conflict'**
- **India's Proposed Grand Strategy- with 2 themes**
 - **'De-Balkanisation of J&K'**
 - **'Re-Asianisation of Asia'.**



Defence and Security Relations

- **Training of Afghan soldiers as part of a capacity-building programme.**
- **500 scholarships for children** of martyrs of Afghan Security Forces.
- **Supply of defence equipment:** Gift of 4 Mi-25 Attack helicopters to Afghan Air Force.
- **Police:**
 - **MoU on Technical Cooperation** on Police Training and Development seeks India to expand its capacity building of Afghan troops.
 - **Strategic Partnership Council included an Indian commitment** to 116 "New Development Projects" + enhanced security cooperation

Challenges in India's efforts

- **Security concerns:**
 - **Withdrawal of NATO-led Security Assistance Force** personnel from Afghanistan turning into a **springboard for destabilization and terrorism.**
 - Formation of Taliban govt. In Afghanistan.
- **Pakistan's support for Taliban:** destabilizing India's development efforts.
- **Sustainability challenge:** Due to **deteriorating security situation** and **insurgent influence** or control of territory, the **sustainability** of Indian **projects** is **doubtful.**



Implications of Taliban's takeover in Afghanistan for India

- **Political Implications**
 - **Agreement includes a clause prohibiting Taliban from allowing any terrorist action on Afghan land**, particularly against US and its allies.
 - **Unclear whether India**, which isn't a US ally, **will be affected**.
 - **Pakistan may have a sway over Taliban** because it is regarded as a close ally.
 - **Taliban ideology is linked to Pakistan** and is opposed to Indian ideology.

| INDIA'S ECONOMIC CONCERNS | | |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Fate of Chabahar Port hangs in balance. Construced with the aim of bypassin pakistan. If Taliban emerges. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● India has helped Afganistan build infra projects worth \$3 billion. Important ones | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Include Salma Dam shatoot Dam, Afghan Parliament etc. ● Given India's anti-Taliban stance, these structures face attack threat. |
| SECURITY CONCERNS | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Afghan soil may b used by anti-India elements ● Jaish-e-Mohammed and | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lashkaer-e- Taiba have shifted base to Afganishtan ● Militants from kasmir could be | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Stationaed in Afghanistand and trained for anti-India activities. |

- **Strategic Implications**
 - **With Talibans taking control, route to Central Asia might be closed** for India.
 - **Taliban governance may give countries like Pakistan and China upper hand-** not in India's strategic interests.

India-Sri Lanka relations

Brief description of Sri Lanka:

- **Official name:** Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka
- **Location:** island country in **South Asia** which lies in **Indian Ocean**
 - **Southwest:** Bay of Bengal
 - **Southeast:** Arabian Sea
 - **North:** Palk Strait
- **Maritime border:** India and Maldives.
- **Capital:** Sri Jayawardenepura Kotte, legislative capital





Historical relations

Ancient: Ramayana: earliest mention of Sri Lanka

- **Ravana**, king of Lanka, held Sita captive, rescued by Ram with help of **Hanuman** -India's first diplomat, and built **Adam's Bridge** to help Ram reach Lanka.

Medieval: Buddhism: spread over Sri Lanka some **2000 years ago** during **Ashoka**

Pre independence:

- **British Rule:** Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) colonially under **British**, not a part of British India Empire, being administered separately.
- **1830: British took indentured labour from India**, especially Tamil Nadu, to Ceylon.
- **Tamils transported by British settled in northern part of Ceylon.**

Post Independence:

- **Tamils disenfranchised in 1949.**
- **Official Language Act No.33 of 1956 or Sinhala Only Act replaced English with Sinhala as sole official language of Ceylon**, with exclusion of Tamil.



- Further **institutionalized discrimination** with **tamils**.
- **Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)** involved in an **armed conflict** with **Sri Lankan armed forces** from 1983 to 2009.
- **India-Sri Lanka Agreement, 1987**
 - **Parties:** PM **Rajiv Gandhi** and President **J.R. Jayewardene**
 - **Objective:** to **end civil war** in Sri Lanka
 - **Envisaged creation** of **provincial councils** with autonomy enabled by **13th amendment** to Sri Lankan constitution.
 - **Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF)** sent to **Sri Lanka's Northern and Eastern provinces**, to "guarantee and enforce cessation of hostilities" b/w Tamil separatist groups and govt.
- **Assassination of former PM Rajiv Gandhi in 1991:** **relationship** got further **strained** after it and **changed India's attitude** towards **ethnic conflict** in **Sri Lanka**.
- **Civil War in Sri Lanka ended through military operation** in 2009.
- **India's UNHRC votes against Sri Lanka:** **India voted** in **favour** of **resolutions** asking for a probe in **Sri Lanka's war against LTTE** at Human Rights Council in 2009, 2012, 2013
- **Change of govts.** in India in **2014** and Sri Lanka in **2015** provided an **opportunity for fresh engagement** b/w both countries.
- **Civil Nuclear Agreement** signed in 2015.

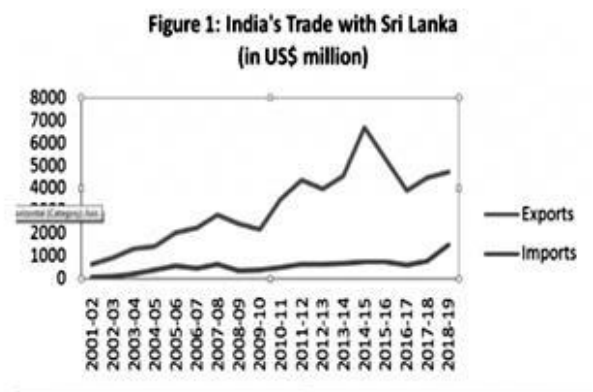
Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE):

- Self-styled "**national freedom movement of people of Tamil Eelam**".
- Began a **guerilla war** on the government and administration.
- Undertook numerous **terrorist activities in Srilanka** against **Sinhalese** and executed **assassination of Rajiv Gandhi**

Areas of cooperation

Economic and Trade Relations:

- **India** is Sri Lanka's **largest trading partner globally**.
- **Sri Lanka** is **India's 2nd-largest trading partner in SAARC**.
- **Indo-Sri Lanka FTA:** signed in **2000**. Trade b/w 2 countries **grew rapidly** after this act
- **Bilateral trade:** ~USD \$ 3.6 billion in 2020.
- **Exports from India:** Motor Vehicles, Mineral fuels & oils, Cotton, Pharmaceutical products, Plastic articles, Iron & Steel, Chemicals, Cement, Sugar etc.
- **Exports from SL:** processed meat products, poultry feed, insulated wires & cables, bottle coolers, apparel, pneumatic tires, tiles & ceramics products, rubber gloves, electrical panel boards & enclosures, machinery parts, food preparations and spices



- **Investment:**
 - **Indian investments in Sri Lanka**
 - **Areas:** petroleum retail, tourism & hotel, manufacturing, real estate, telecommunication, banking and financial services.
 - **Sri Lankan investments in India**
 - **Brandix** (about USD 1 billion to set up a garment city in Visakhapatnam),
 - **MAS holdings, Damro, LTL Holdings**
 - **Currency Swap Agreements:** **RBI signed an agreement for extending a USD 400 million currency swap** facility to Sri Lanka to boost foreign reserves and ensure financial stability of the country.
- **FDI from India** amounted to ~\$ 1.7 billion from 2005 to 2019.
- **Line of credits: 11 LoCs** extended to Sri Lanka by **EXIM bank** in last 15 years.
 - **Sectors:** Railway, transport, connectivity, defence, solar
 - **Important Projects completed:**
 - **Supply of defence equipments;**
 - **Upgradation of railway line** from Colombo to Matara;
 - **track laying by IRCON** on Omanthai-Pallai sector,
 - **Madhu Church Talaimannar, Medawachchiya-Madhu Railway line;**
 - **Reconstruction of Pallai-Kankesanthurai Railway line;**
 - **Signalling and telecommunication system;**
 - **Supply of engine kits** for buses, diesel locomotives railways, DMUs, Carrier and fuel tank wagons etc.
 - **Solar Projects: US\$ 100 million LoC** signed b/w **Govt. of Sri Lanka** and **EXIM Bank** on June 16, 2021
 - **Rooftop solar units** for (Govt buildings, low income families) and
 - **Floating solar power plant.**
- **Developmental & Infrastructure**
 - **Colombo-Matara rail link:** LoC of \$167.4 million has been extended for **repair and upgrade** of this tsunami-damaged link
 - **Infrastructure in Northern and Eastern Provinces:**
 - **Upgrading Jaffna Colombo rail track** and other railway lines,
 - **Providing electricity transmission lines for power imports** from India, and
 - **Rebuilding Kankesanthurai port**
 - **Trincomalee port and oil tank farms:** India signed MoUs in 1987 for its development. **Location,** Kerawalapitiya near Colombo
 - **Joint India-Japan agreement:** signed in 2019
 - **Objective:** to develop **East Container Terminal** at **Colombo harbour** and other projects like the offer to operate the **Mattala Airport**
- **Healthcare:** India **supplied medical equipment** to hospitals at **Hambantota and Point Pedro,** supplied **4 state-of-the-art ambulances** to Central Province etc.
- **Tourism: e-Tourist Visa (eTV) scheme** launched by GoI for Sri Lankan tourists in 2015
- **Rehabilitation post-LTTE war: Indian Housing Project,** to build houses for war-affected + estate workers in plantation areas

Defence relations:

- **Joint Exercises**
 - **Mitra Shakti:** joint **Military** exercise
 - **SLINEX:** joint **Naval** exercise
- **SAGAR: Srilanka supports India** in its **Security** and **Growth** for all in the **Region(SAGAR)**

Cultural relations:

- **Cultural Coop. Agreement:** November, **1977** at New Delhi
 - Basis for **periodic Cultural Exchange Programmes** b/w the **two countries**.
- **Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre (SVCC)**
 - **Cultural arm of High Commission of India**, Colombo,
 - **Areas of training:** Bharatnatyam, Kathak, Hindustani and Carnatic vocal, Violin, Sitar, Tabla, Hindi and Yoga
- **Coop. at international and regional forums:**
 - Both members of several regional and multilateral organisations like **SAARC, BIMSTEC, South Asia Co-operative Environment Programme, South Asian Economic Union**

Challenges

- **Issues of Tamilians in Srilanka:**
 - **Denial of Citizenship** to Sri Lankan Tamils.
 - **Linguistic Discrimination** b/w **Sinhalese and Tamils** in **1956** when Sinhala was made the official language.
 - **Religious Discrimination: Buddhism primary religion** and **Tamil employment** by state and **admission** into institutions of higher learning was greatly **restricted**
 - **Intensified Movements due to** increasing **Tamil separatism and militancy** gave rise to a terrorist organization called **LTTE in 1970s**.
- **Fishermen Issue**





SEA OF TROUBLES

Despite SL and India sharing a good relation in the 1950s, trawling has been a bone of contention

1950 -1975 | Both Indian and Sri Lankan fishermen had country boats; **affluent Jaffna fishermen had motor powered boats**

> Both sides used to fish together and were **cordial towards each other**

1975 to 1983 | Indian fishermen start procuring **mechanized trawlers**

> **Katchatheevu** ceded to Sri Lanka in 1974

Why is trawling bad?

> Intensive trawling results in depletion of many kinds of fish. **"Bycatch"** – **unmarketable fish, marine mammals, even seabirds get caught** in this method



- **Katchatheevu Island issue:**

- An uninhabited island located b/w **Neduntheevu, Sri Lanka** and **Rameswaram, India**
- **Kachchativu island pact** under which India ceded it to Sri Lanka in 1974
- Later, Sri Lanka declared Katchatheevu, a **sacred land** because of a **Catholic shrine**
- **Claims of Tamil Nadu:** Katchatheevu falls **under Indian Territory** and therefore want to preserve the right to fish there.

- **China factor in India-Sri Lanka relation:**

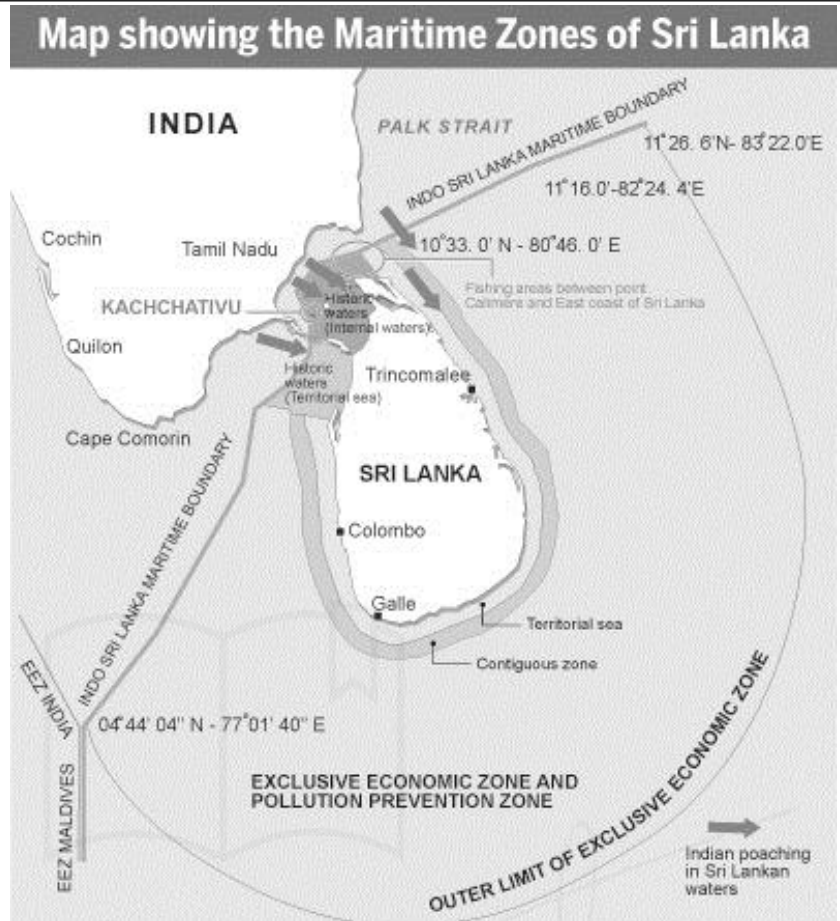
- Sri Lanka endorsed China's flagship connectivity project, **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**
- SL leased **Hambantota port to China** for 99 years which is a concern for India

- **Issue of smuggling:**

- Smuggling of **gold, drugs, fake Indian currency notes (FICN), wildlife**, and other contraband takes place illegally through sea route

Way forward

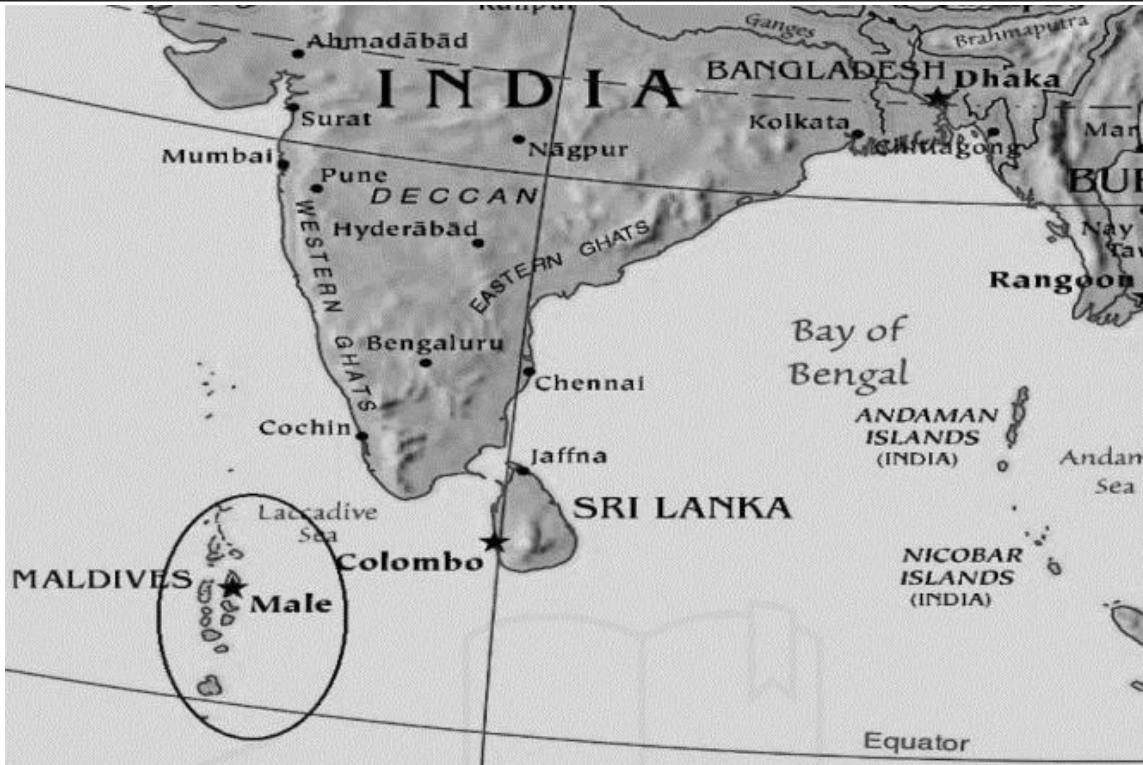
- Both nations **democratic** - room to grow and strengthen connections.
- **Fishermen issue:** Both should find a long-term solution through **bilateral discussions**.
- **CEPA:** To increase economic coop. b/w 2 nations.
- Greater emphasis on **historical and Cultural links**.
- **People-to-people connections** through launch of **ferry services** b/w India and Sri Lanka.
- **Mutual acknowledgement** of each other's **concerns and interests** can help both countries enhance their relationship.



India- Maldives relations

- **Officially name:** Republic of Maldives
- An **archipelagic country** in **Indian subcontinent of Asia** = situated in Indian Ocean.
- **Lies southwest of Sri Lanka and India**, ~ 750 kilometres from Asian continent's mainland.
- Share **ethnic, linguistic, cultural, religious and commercial links** steeped in antiquity.
- **Maldivian Archipelago** located on **Chagos-Laccadive Ridge**, a vast submarine mountain range in IOR forming a **terrestrial eco-region**, together with Chagos Archipelago and Lakshadweep.





Historic relations

- **Pre-independence:** Maldives, a British colony since mid-1880s, and became a British Protectorate on 6th December, 1887.
- **Post independence:** India, 1st to recognize Maldives after its independence in 1965 and establish diplomatic relations with country in 1972.
- Except for a brief period b/w February 2012 to November 2018, relations close, cordial and multi-dimensional.



Geo-political and strategic significance

- **Proximity to West coast of India:**
 - 70 nautical miles from Minicoy and 300 nautical miles from West Coast.
- **Combating piracy:** Maldives a victim of piracy and favours a collective engagement to tackle it along with India.
- **Gun running and terrorism:** Maldivian coop. significant for preventing such activities.
- **International trade:** Maldives situated at hub of commercial sea lanes of IOR.
 - ~97% of India's international trade by volume, 75% by value passes through here.
- **Growing Chinese interests:** China rapidly expanding its footprint in Maldives.



Political situation in Maldives and India's response

- **Mohamed Nasheed** - first democratically- elected President of Maldives in 2008.
 - Stepped down after a coup in 2012.
- Since then, Indian Ocean archipelago is witnessing political tussles.
- **Nasheed took refuge at Indian High Commission** once, fearing arrest under regime of his successor.
- **2013 - Abdulla Yameen** was elected president in 2013
- Nasheed jailed for 13 years in 2015 on terrorism charges- condemned internationally.



- **2016 - Mohd. Nasheed** received **political asylum** in the **UK**.
- **June 2016 - opposition groups united** to form **Maldives United Opposition** to restore democracy by **removing Yameen**.
- **India largely silent** on the major assault **on democratic institutions** and the **Opposition** in the archipelago nation, **while most countries** including the US, UK, and the European Union, **have condemned** the **Yameen Government's transgressions**.
- **India's Assistance to Maldives:**
 - **Operation Cactus, 1988:** Indian Armed Forces helped government of Maldives to neutralise coup attempt under this operation.
 - **2004: India helped Maldives after tsunami.**
 - **'Operation Neer', 2014: India supplied drinking water to Maldives** to deal with the drinking water crisis under this operation

People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE):

- **1988 - speedboats** carrying **80 armed militants** of PLOTE **landed in Maldives** and along with local defector allies who had infiltrated the country, **began a coup**
- The **then-Indian PM responded** by **ordering 1,600 troops** to aid Maldivian government - Operation Cactus.
- **Indian forces arrived within 12 hours** of the request for aid being made, **squashed the coup attempt** and **achieved full control** of the country within hours.

Areas of cooperation

Economic relations

- **Both** signed a **trade agreement** in **1981**
- **Bilateral trade : US\$ 290.27 mn** with trade balance for India.
- **India** is Maldives' **4th largest trade partner** after UAE, China and Singapore.
- **Indian imports:** 3.42 mn US \$ = scrap metals
- **Indian exports:** 290.27 mn US \$ = variety of engineering and industrial products like drugs and medicines, radar apparatus, rock boulders, aggregates, cement and agriculture produce like rice, spices, fruits, vegetables and poultry produce etc.
- **3 MoUs** for implementation of High Impact Community Development projects for setting up neighbourhood fish plants in Addu, exchange of an MoU b/w National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) & Bank of Maldives (BML) to launch RuPay Card in Maldives
- MoU on cooperation b/w Financial Intelligence Units of India were signed.
- **Instrument of Ratification for the Treaty on Mutual Legal Assistance** in Criminal Matters is also being signed.
- **Investment by SBI:** it has been playing a vital role in the economic development of Maldives since February, 1974 **by providing loan assistance for promotion of island resorts**, export of marine products and business enterprises.
- **SBI's COVID-relief:** has **provided liquidity support of USD 16.20 million** for local businesses and deferred loan repayment for over 200 retail accounts.



GMR Maldives Airport Controversy:

- **GMR - Indian infrastructure major - given > \$ 500 million contract** by the then **Maldivian government to upgrade its Male airport** and build a new airport terminal.
- **Current government scrapped** the contract.
- **GMR approached the Singapore High Court** which stayed the scrapping of the contract
- **GMR won arbitration** and awarded **\$570 mn** .

Defence Cooperation

- **India gifted** Patrol Vessel named "**KAAMIYAAB**" to **Maldives National Defence Force**.
- **India provides** the largest number of **training opportunities for MNDF**.
- **Key projects:** Composite Training Centre for MNDF, Coastal Radar Surveillance System and construction of new Ministry of Defence
- **2 indigenously designed** and developed **advanced Light Helicopters (ALH)** are also **given by India to Maldivian armed forces**.

Development Assistance

- **US \$500 million assistance** for **Greater Male Connectivity project (GMCP)** to connect Male to three neighbouring islands
- **Major completed development assistance:** Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital, Maldives Institute of Technical Education, Construction of National Police Academy etc.
- **Grants for projects under High Impact Community Development Projects (HICDPs):** include projects such as ambulances, Convention Centre, drug rehabilitation centre, police station up-gradation, development of Addu Tourism zone etc.

Covid assistance

- **Direct cargo ferry service** b/w India and Maldives,
- Creation of an **Air Travel Bubble b/w India and Maldives**,
- **Renewal of quotas** for supply of essential commodities to Maldives for 2020-21
- **Extension of financial assistance to Maldives** to help them deal with devastating impact of Covid-19 on their economy.

Tourism

- **Maldivian economy**, heavily dependent on its **tourism** sector, accounts ~**quarter of GDP**.
- **In 2018, India 5th largest source of tourist arrivals** in Maldives (6.1%).
- **Medical tourism:**
 - **India provides treatment** and health services at a **nominal cost**.
 - It is **one of the most accessible countries** to be approached for medication.
 - **Maldives- benefited** with the excellent and high-end medical system of India.

Medical Cooperation

- **MoU:** Signed on **June 8, 2019** for **collaboration and coop. in Health sector**.
- **Series of health and humanitarian assistance** provided in **2020** that included **donation of 5.5 tonnes of essential medicines**, airlifting of 6.2 tonnes of medicines by IAF from various India cities through **Operation Sanjeevani**,

- **Supply of 580 tonnes of food aid** under **Mission SAGAR** by **INS Kesari** and deployment of Rapid Response Medical Team to assist.
- **Vaccine support: Maldives = 1st country to receive Covid-19 vaccines** from India when India gifted 100,000 doses in January 2021.

People to people relations

- **Indians, second-largest expatriate community in Maldives.**
- About **25% of Doctors and Teachers in Maldives** = Indian nationals.
- **India** is preferred **destination for Maldivians for education, medical treatment, recreation and business.**
- India offers **scholarships** to Maldivian students under SAARC Chair Fellowship and ITEC.
- **India Cultural Centre (ICC)** in Male, conducts courses in yoga, classical music and dance.
- Hindi commercial films + TV serials + music = immensely popular in Maldives.

Regional cooperation

- Both are members of **SAARC, SASEC, IORA and Indian Ocean Naval Symposium**

Connectivity

- **Air Travel Bubble:** to facilitate movement of people for employment, tourism, medical emergencies etc.
 - boosted tourist inflow in Maldives and **India became the largest tourist sending country for Maldives.**
- **Commencement of direct cargo ferry service:** b/w both to **enhance sea connectivity and provide predictability** in supplies and reduce logistics cost for India Maldives trade.

Cultural Relations:

- **“Order of Distinguished Rule of Nishan Izzuddeen” conferred to Indian PM**
 - Highest honour of Maldives accorded to foreign dignitaries.

Challenges

- **Chinese debt trap diplomacy:** Maldives’ reliance on China to develop > US\$2.5 billion in infrastructure projects - accumulation of **foreign debt 40% of country’s GDP.**
- **Signing FTA with China ignoring India:** Also **endorsed its Maritime Silk Road project** shunned by India for its strategic implications in IOR.
- **Political instability:** Maldives as democracy is yet to take a firm footing.
 - Eg: **Maldives announced termination of a USD 511 million project** with the Indian infrastructure company GMR Infrastructure Limited in 2012.
 - Also **challenged overall security of IOR by increasing radicalisation** of Maldivians and by granting of **non-transparent permissions for foreign investment.**
- **Terrorism and radicalisation:** Maldivians drawn towards terrorist groups like Islamic State (IS) and **jihadi groups** - increasing possibility to use **Maldivian islands as a launchpad for terror attacks** against India cannot be rejected.
- **Concerns of workers:** **Maldives denied work permits to ~2000 Indians** working there in 2018 and **job advertisements mentioning ‘Indians need not apply’, denied visas.**

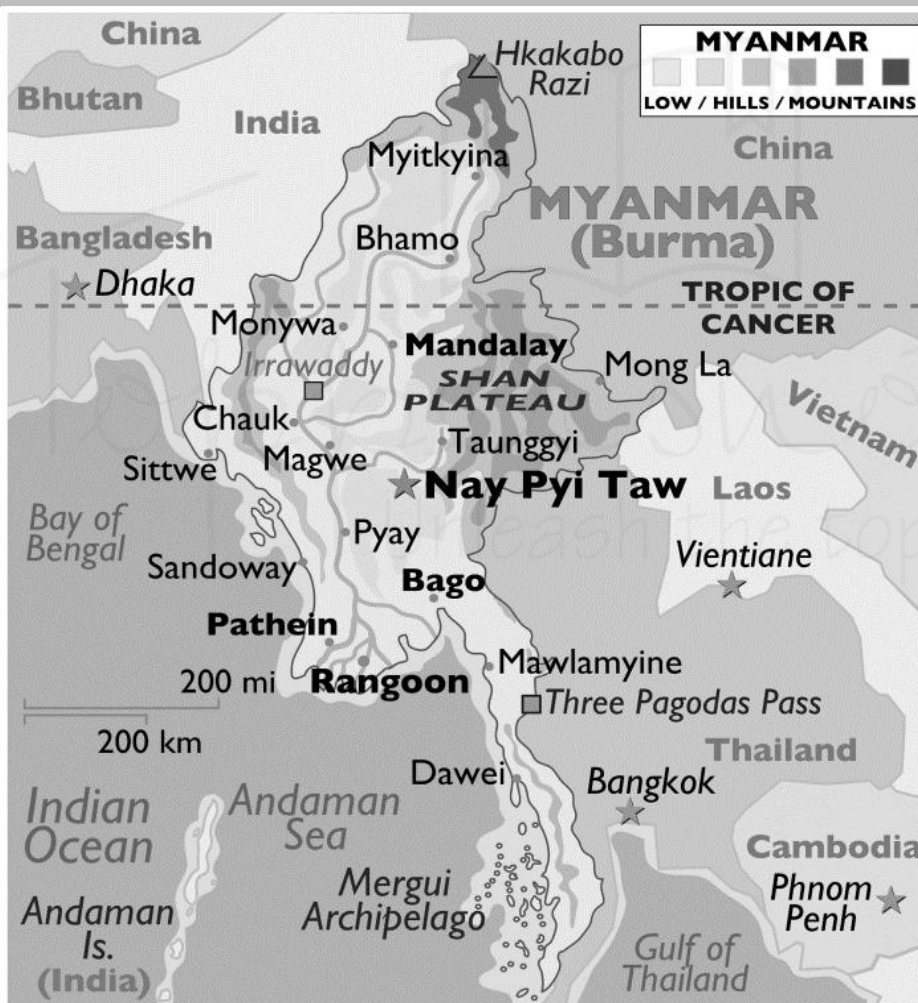


- **India's vote against Maldives:** India voted against and even campaigned against Maldives in its bid to secure a non-permanent seat to UNSC in 2018.

Way Forward

- To become **Net-security provider** in IOR, India needs close military, naval ties with Maldives.
- Need to **enhance regional coop. by using platforms** like Indian Ocean RIM Association and Indian Ocean Naval Symposium.
- **Maldives** occupies a very **special place** in 'SAGAR vision of Gol.
- 'India-First Policy' of Maldives and India's 'Neighbourhood First Policy' are intuitively complementary, implementing them with strategic sensitivity is of utmost importance.
- **India needs to adhere to Gujral doctrine** to guide conduct of foreign relations with India's immediate neighbours.

India-Myanmar relations



- **Official Name:** Republic of the Union of Myanmar, formerly Burma; **Capital:** Naypyidaw
- **Largest country in Mainland Southeast Asia**
- **Geography:** **Northwest:** Bangladesh and India, **Northeast:** China, **East:** Laos, **Southeast:** Thailand, **South:** Andaman Sea , **Southwest:** Bay of Bengal
- **India** shares **terrestrial + maritime border** with Myanmar.
- **India-Myanmar Border Length:** 1600 km
 - **States(4):** Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Mizoram, and Manipur.