



drishti

India-Pak Tension Amidst Covid-19

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Why in News

Recently, India has said that the degree of seriousness of each **South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation** (SAARC) member-nation in collectively fighting the **Covid-19 pandemic** can be gauged by their behaviour.

The statement is in clear reference to Pakistan's opposition to India's leadership in dealing with the crisis in the region.

Key Points

- Pakistan has pledged to contribute \$3 million to **SAARC Covid-19 Emergency Fund**.
- Pakistan has also demanded that any **initiative to deal with the situation must be brought under SAARC's framework** and utilised in accordance with the SAARC charter.
- **Pakistan also boycotted a video conference of trade officials** of the SAARC members.

It has said that these initiatives would only be effective if these are headed by the group's secretariat and not by India.

- India has maintained that **such initiatives** (formation of emergency fund) are **taken under extraordinary circumstances** which are **focused on jointly fighting** an issue or problem **without the limitations of procedural formalities**.

Each member nation has the **right to decide on the timing, manner and implementation** of their SAARC Covid-19 Emergency Fund commitments.

India's Role

- India has **taken the lead role in taking preventive measures** against the **novel coronavirus** crisis in the region.

- In March, India proposed an **Covid-19 Emergency Fund** in the **video conference of SAARC members** on **forming a joint strategy** to fight Covid-19.
 - The Fund would be based on a **voluntary contribution** from all SAARC members.
 - **Indian Prime Minister contributed \$10 million** to the fund.
 - Following Indian lead ,subsequently, Nepal and Afghanistan (\$1 million each), Maldives (\$200,000), Bhutan (\$100,000), Bangladesh (\$1.5 million) and Sri Lanka (\$5 million) also pledged to contribute to the fund.
 - The fund is used to **meet the cost of immediate actions** by any member and will be coordinated through foreign secretaries and embassies of the member countries.
- India has also **extended assistance in materials and services to Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, the Maldives (Operation Sanjeevani), Nepal and Sri Lanka** keeping in mind their early commitments to the fund and serious behaviour.

South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation

- It was **established on 8th December 1985** with the signing of the **SAARC Charter in Dhaka (Bangladesh)**.
- It has 8 members: **Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Afghanistan**.
 - **Afghanistan** became its **newest member** at the **13th annual summit in 2005**
- The **Headquarters** and **Secretariat** are at **Kathmandu, Nepal**.
- **Principles:**
 - Respect for the principles of sovereign equality, territorial integrity, political independence, non-interference in the internal affairs of other States and mutual benefit.
 - Such cooperation shall not be a substitute for bilateral and multilateral cooperation but shall complement them.
 - Such cooperation shall not be inconsistent with bilateral and multilateral obligations.



Maldives



Nepal



Pakistan



Sri Lanka



Afghanistan



Bangladesh



Bhutan



India

Source: IE