



Mains Practice Question

Q. The suspension of cross-LoC trade in Jammu and Kashmir region, which was started as one of the main steps in confidence building measures, will impact in multiple ways, apart from controlling terror linked and illegal activities along the trade corridor. Discuss (250 words)

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Approach:

- Briefly describe the recent decision of government of suspension of trade.
- Enlist and describe the impact of this decision.
- Give conclusion.

Introduction:

- India has suspended cross LoC trade between Jammu & Kashmir and Pakistan-Occupied-Kashmir (PoK) on grounds that the trade routes were being misused for funnelling illegal weapons, narcotics and fake currency.
- The opening of cross-LoC trade was among the confidence-building mechanisms that followed the 2003 India-Pakistan ceasefire along the line, and that included a bus service between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad (in PoK).

Body

Impact of suspension of trade across LOC

- **Loss of Employment opportunities:** It is estimated that since the barter trade commenced along two routes across the LoC in October 2008, employment to the order of more than 1.6 lakh days had been created. Thus creating economic opportunities for local people which is critical in weaning away youth from normalizing of conflict situation.
- **Blow for peaceful resolution of Kashmir issue:** It is unfortunate that the government has decided to "suspend" this Kashmir-specific confidence building measure, through this it was hoped that Kashmir problem may be solved in near future. The hope of the mid-2000s that people-to-people contact between those living in J&K and PoK would over time become obstruction-free has, for now, faded.
- **Kashmir as electoral issue:** Kashmir has been increasingly portrayed as emotive issue. Issues of Article 370, 35A have been taken as national electoral issues. There are concerns that suspension of trade is populist measure and is a signal for domestic constituency for electoral gains.
- **People to people contact:** More than its trading value in currency terms, the cross Loc trade holds much symbolic value in Jammu & Kashmir, especially in the Poonch-Rawalakot sector, where there are large number of divided families. Allowing people to people contact was seen as first step in Kashmir issue resolution.

Conclusion:

The government's security concerns may be well-founded, but it may have been better solved through enforcement of the rules stringently. The volume of trade over the decade has crossed ₹6,000 crore and

the trade is mostly of local goods, and those employed are from border communities. The suspension of trade has significant economic and political fallouts.

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