

Sansad TV Perspective: India- Egypt Relations

In the series Sansad TV Perspective, we bring you an analysis of the discussion featured on the insightful programme ‘Perspective’ on Sansad TV, on various important topics affecting India and also the world. This analysis will help you immensely for the [IAS exam](#), especially the mains exam, where a well-rounded understanding of topics is a prerequisite for writing answers that fetch good marks.

In this article, we feature the discussion on the topic: ‘**India-Egypt Relations**’.

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Guests:

1. Virendra Gupta, Former Ambassador & President, Antar Rashtriya Sahyog Parishad
2. Pramit Pal Chaudhuri, Foreign Affairs Editor, Hindustan Times
3. Prof. Rajaram Panda, Senior Fellow, Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi

Context: Bilateral talks were held between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi recently.

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Introduction:

- Abdel Fattah El-Sisi arrived in India for meetings with political and business leaders. He will also participate as the chief guest in celebrations of India’s [Republic Day](#).
- During bilateral talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi both countries have agreed to elevate their bilateral ties to Strategic Partnership.
- Both leaders held discussions over a wide range of issues with five agreements signed on cooperation in areas of culture, IT, cyber security, youth matters and broadcasting.

Significance of a Republic Day invite:

- An invitation to be the Republic Day chief guest is highly symbolic from the Indian government's perspective.
- New Delhi has been weaving strategy with hospitality to decide its chief guest for the Republic Day.
- The choice of chief guest every year is dictated by a number of reasons — strategic and diplomatic, business interests, and international geo-politics.
- El-Sisi is the first Egyptian president to be invited as guest of honour for the annual Republic Day parade which is expected to impart fresh momentum to India's ties with Egypt.
- The invitation to Mr. Sisi is also being seen as part of the government's push to engage the "Global South", and as a rekindling of the principles of non-alignment that have come back to the fore after the Russian war in Ukraine began in February 2022.
 - In the wake of Western sanctions against Russia and a ban on wheat exports in India, India had made an exception for Egypt.
- This is an important gesture by India at a time the world was re-discovering multipolarity.

Highlights of Bilateral Talks:

- India and Egypt agreed on January 25, 2023, to elevate their bilateral ties to "Strategic Partnership" covering political, security, defence, energy and economic aspects.
- Both sides inked five agreements providing for cooperation in areas of culture, information technology, cyber security, matters relating to youths and broadcasting.
- Both also discussed the cascading impact of the Russia-Ukraine conflict on availability of food, energy and fertiliser, and called for a "coordinated and concerted" approach to deal with terrorism, including cross-border terrorist activities.
- The two leaders also decided to take the volume of bilateral trade to USD 12 billion in the next five years from around USD seven billion at present.
- Both expressed concerns about the spread of terrorism around the world as it is the most serious security threat to humanity.
 - Consequently, the two countries agreed that concerted action is necessary to end cross-border terrorism.
- PM Modi and President Sisi also witnessed the release of commemorative postage stamps to mark the milestone of 75 years of the establishment of diplomatic ties between India and Egypt.

Significance of Egypt to India:

- Being two of the world's oldest civilizations- India and Egypt have enjoyed a history of close contact from ancient times. India is keen to further expand ties with Egypt, a key player in the politics of both the Arab world as well as Africa.
- Egypt under Sisi is seen as a moderate Islamic voice among Muslim-majority countries, as well as India's "friend" within the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), that routinely issues statements condemning India's policy in Jammu & Kashmir and the situation of Muslims in the country, at Pakistan's behest.
 - In August 2022, Egypt Post released a commemorative postage stamp to celebrate 75 years of diplomatic relations between Egypt and India that were established with Egypt's recognition of the independence of India on 18 August 1947.
- Security is also an important field of co-operation. Ongoing visit by El-Sisi comes as India is increasingly working with Egypt and Gulf allies to deal with maritime tensions. Naval and air units from both states have conducted joint war games.
- Both also share intelligence to fight terrorism.
- As India seeks to expand its economic and strategic interests in the Gulf region and Africa and further strengthen its 'Look West' policy, peace and stability in the area are critical. Egypt forms a key vector in this equation.
- Egypt has traditionally been one of India's most important trading partners in the African continent. Bilateral trade expanded in 2021-22, amounting to 7.26 billion, registering a 75% increase compared to FY 2020-21.
 - India's exports to Egypt during this period amounted to US\$ 3.74 billion, registering a 65% increase over the same period in FY 2020-21.
 - India was the 3rd largest export market for Egypt, 6th largest trading partner and 7th largest exporter to Egypt.
 - The Suez Canal and the Gulf of Aden are key routes of trade for India. About 20-24 Indian flagged merchant ships transit the Gulf of Aden every month.

Conclusion: Egypt and India are vital to one another. Both are exploring avenues for deeper collaboration and convergence at various levels of engagement. With Egypt serving as India's "Gateway to Africa" and a critical partner in seeking strategic convergence with stakeholders in the region, the time has come for the two countries to advance their relationship and seek greater strategic convergence.