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OIC's Proposal on India and **Pakistan**

Context:

Recently, the Ministry of External Affairs rejected the Organization of Islamic Cooperation's (OIC) proposal to assist a dialogue between India and Pakistan.

Earlier in December 2020, India also rejected the criticism of its Kashmir policy by the OIC.

About:

Organisation of Islamic Cooperation

- It is the second largest intergovernmental organization after the United Nations (UN) with a membership of 57 states.
- It is the collective voice of the Muslim world. It endeavors to safeguard and protect the interests of the Muslim world in the spirit of promoting international peace and harmony among various people of the world.
- India is not a member of the OIC.
- It was established upon a decision of the historical summit which took place in Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco in September 1969.

- **Headquarters: Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.**

OIC's Stand:

- Offered to arrange a meeting between India and Pakistan and proposed to send a delegation to Jammu & Kashmir in line with resolutions of the OIC council of foreign ministers.
- Pakistan has repeatedly sought to raise the Kashmir issue at the OIC against the backdrop of India's dramatically improved relations with several key players in West Asia and in the Islamic organisation, including Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Qatar, Indonesia and Bangladesh.

India's Response:

- The OIC should be watchful that their platform is not subverted by "vested interests" such as Pakistan to interfere in internal affairs of India or for anti-India propaganda through biased and one-sided resolutions.

India's relationship with OIC as an organisation:

- At the 45th session of the Foreign Ministers' Summit in 2018, Bangladesh, the host, suggested that India, where more than 10% of the world's Muslims live, should be given Observer status, but Pakistan opposed the proposal.
- In 2019, India made its maiden appearance at the OIC Foreign Ministers' meeting, as a "guest of honour".
- This first-time invitation was seen as a diplomatic victory for India, especially at a time of heightened tensions with Pakistan following the Pulwama attack.

Criticism of India's Policies by OIC:

- It has been generally supportive of Pakistan's stand on Kashmir, and has issued statements criticising the alleged Indian "atrocities" in the state/Union Territory.
- In 2018, the OIC General Secretariat had "expressed strong condemnation of the killing of innocent Kashmiris by Indian forces in Indian-occupied Kashmir".

- It described the “direct shooting at demonstrators” as a “terrorist act”, and “called upon the international community to play its role in order to reach a just and lasting solution to the conflict in Kashmir”.
- OIC has criticised the Government of India over the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, and the Babri Masjid verdict of the Supreme Court.
- OIC has also criticised the Indian government for what it called “growing Islamophobia” in India.

India’s Response:

- India has always maintained that OIC has no locus standi in matters strictly internal to India including that of Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir which is an integral and inalienable part of India.

India’s relationship with OIC member countries:

- Individually, India has good relations with almost all member nations.
- Ties with the UAE and Saudi Arabia, especially, have improved significantly in recent years.
- The Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi (UAE) was a special chief guest at the 68th Republic Day celebrations in 2017.
- The OIC includes two of India’s close neighbours, Bangladesh and Maldives.
- Indian diplomats say both countries privately admit that they do not want to complicate their bilateral ties with India on Kashmir.

Council of Ministers

Context:

Recently, the Prime Minister expanded and reshuffled his Council of Ministers (COM). The Prime Minister now has 77 ministers, nearly half of them new.

About:

Council of Ministers

- **Article 74 of the Constitution** deals with the status of the council of ministers while Article 75 deals with the appointment, tenure, responsibility, qualification, oath and salaries and allowances of the ministers.
- The COM consists of three categories of ministers, namely, cabinet ministers, ministers of state, and deputy ministers. At the top of all these ministers stands the Prime Minister.
- **Cabinet Ministers:** These head the important ministries of the Central government like home, defense, finance, external affairs and so forth.
- Cabinet is the chief policy formulating body of the Central government.
- **Ministers of State:** These can either be given independent charge of ministries/ departments or can be attached to cabinet ministers.
- **Deputy Ministers:** They are attached to the cabinet ministers or ministers of state and assist them in their administrative, political, and parliamentary duties.
- At times, the COM may also include a deputy prime minister. The deputy prime ministers are appointed mostly for political reasons.

Constitutional Provisions:

- **Article 74 (COM to aid and advice President):** The advice tendered by Ministers to the President shall not be inquired into in any court.
- The President may require the COM to reconsider such advice and the President shall act in accordance with the advice tendered after such reconsideration.

- **Article 75 (Other Provisions as to Ministers):**The PM shall be appointed by the President and the other Ministers shall be appointed by the President on the advice of the PM.
- The total number of ministers, including the Prime Minister, in the COM shall not exceed 15% of the total strength of the Lok Sabha.
- This provision was added by the 91st Amendment Act of 2003.
- A minister who is not a member of the Parliament (either house) for any period of six consecutive months shall cease to be a minister.
- **Article 77 (Conduct of Business of the Government of India):**The President shall make rules for the more convenient transaction of the business of the Government of India, and for the allocation among Ministers of the said business.
- **Article 78 (Duties of Prime Minister):**To communicate to the President all decisions of the COM relating to the administration of the affairs of the Union and proposals for legislation.
- **Article 88 (Rights of Ministers as Respects the Houses):**Every minister shall have the right to speak and take part in the proceedings of either House, any joint sitting of the Houses and any Committee of Parliament of which he may be named a member. But he shall not be entitled to vote.

Responsibility of Ministers:

- **Collective Responsibility:** Article 75 clearly states that the COM is collectively responsible to the Lok Sabha. This means that all the ministers own joint responsibility to the Lok Sabha for all their acts of omission and commission.
- **Individual Responsibility:** Article 75 also contains the principle of individual responsibility. It states that the ministers hold office during the pleasure of the President, which means that the President can remove a minister even at a time when the COM enjoys the confidence of the Lok Sabha.
- However, the President removes a minister only on the advice of the Prime Minister.

Council of Ministers in States:

- The **Council of Ministers in the states** is constituted and functions in the **same way** as the **Council of Ministers at the Centre (Article 163: COM to aid and advise Governor)** and **Article 164: Other Provisions as to Ministers**).

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