



ECONOMIC  
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GOVERNANCE

## KARTARPUR CORRIDOR

*(written by Amisha)*

Kartarpur marks the most significant and constructive phase in the life of Guru Nanak Dev Ji. The name Kartarpur means “Place of God”. During the 1947 partition of India the region got divided across India and Pakistan. The Radcliff line awarded the shakargarh tehsil on the right bank of the river including Kartarpur to Pakistan and the Gurdaspur tehsil on the left bank of Ravi to India.



The wait is now over, pilgrims who used to stand on platforms with folded hands and binoculars to catch a clear view of the holy Kartarpur Gurudwara can literally now cross the border and visit the shrine. This is the first time since partition in 1947 that the border between the two Punjabis, apart from the crossing at wagah-Attari, is being breached in peacetime.

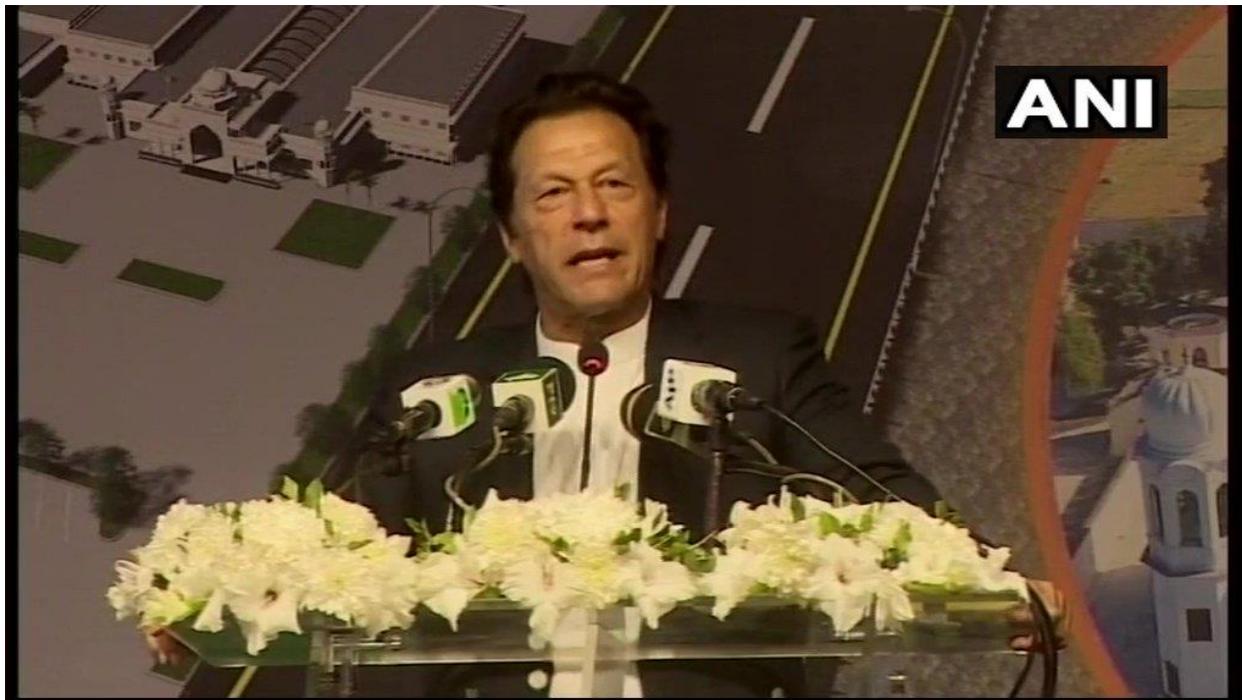


The India and Pakistan open Kartarpur corridor on the occasion of Guru Nanak Dev ji's Parkash Purab. This has fulfilled long waited wish of more than 6 million Sikhs. This corridor has been designed to facilitate easy access for the pilgrims visiting the shrine. It includes hotels, commercial areas, apartments, parking lots, border facility area, power grid station and an information center. A bridge over the Ravi connects the Indian side at Dera, Baba Nanak with kartarpur on Pakistani side.



The Indians visiting the shrine wouldn't require any visa but their passport and would undergo some security and obtain special permission. On a daily basis 5000 pilgrims can register and get a chance to visit their holy place. Indian railways have upgraded the Dera Baba Nanak railway station for easy movement of the pilgrims.

Pakistan's military has a strategic purpose in opening up the kartarpur corridor and India is wary of its 'ulterior motive'. This is however a big question mark over the project.



The world's largest gurdwara will be visited by Sikhs from across India and other parts of the World. This will become a major religious hub for the Sikh community, and will boost the local economy, result in earning foreign exchange for the country creating jobs in different sectors including travel and hospitality.

An anomaly of the partition created by the Radcliff line, which demarcated the international border between India and Pakistan, has been in news for decades. This topic has several discourses to it but it still remains a big question mark. Islamist parties in Pakistan have slammed the government's decision to open the Kartarpur corridor, saying it is a tantamount to Kashmir's special status on August 5. Some groups in the country also believe that the visa free border crossing would be a compromise on national sovereignty.

The project has been dubbed a milestone of peace between India and Pakistan, two south Asian neighbors with an acrimonious history.

However, despite the unprecedent Kartarpur move, observers says ties between India and Pakistan are likely to remain tense.

## [Why India opted out of the RCEP agreement?](#)

*(written by Manan Pahwa)*

The RCEP negotiations started in 2011 and this year there was a big push to get it finalised. After India's rejection the remaining 15 members decided to go ahead and underlined their intent to sign a trade deal sometime next year keeping the door open for India to join in at a later date. With china and USA engage in a trade war and cooling of relations this particular trade agreement was very important and they were very keen to see a successful conclusion to the RCEP summit. They had been vigorously been pushing it but that's where the problem for India lays as well. India's demand at the RCEP negotiations included shifting the base year for the tariff cuts from 2014-2019, avoiding a sudden surge in imports from China by including a large number of

items in an auto trigger mechanism, calling for stricter rules of origin to prevent dumping from china and a better deal in services. Another barrier for India in signing this deal was the large trade deficits it has with some of the signee of the agreement. While India runs large trade deficits with at least 11 of the 15 RCEP members, China alone accounts for \$53 billion of India's \$105 billion trade deficit with these. Given China's needs for greater access to Indian market to sustain its manufacturing industries, India was keen to protect its industry and farmers from a surge in Chinese imports. India's experience with Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) has been underwhelming, with the NITI Aayog suggesting that FTA utilisation, which is in the 5%-25% range, was measly. Domestically, the RCEP generated considerable opposition with major stakeholders coming out against it, be it farmers, dairy industry or the corporate sector. The Opposition Congress Party, which joined the RCEP negotiations seven years ago, too decided that it was politically expedient to oppose the pact. Difficulties in the Indian economic landscape further compounded the problems. If global negotiations are a "two level" game, both the levels were facing severe challenges, making this rejection a veritable necessity. The Modi government's proactive outreach to the region in the form of its 'Act East' policy has been well received. Anxious about China's increasingly overweening economic and security presence in the region, ASEAN member states have been keen on a substantive Indian involvement in the region. India's decision to keep away from the RCEP will, hence, certainly cause concerns about its larger game plan vis-a-vis the region. New Delhi's entire Indo-Pacific strategy might be open to question if steps are not taken to restore India's profile in the region. For China, this looks like a win at a time when the Trump administration is pushing Asia into making a choice in its favour by jettisoning Chinese largesse on infrastructure and technology. Also economic isolation is not an option for India and the country needs to put more effort in bilateral trade pacts. India needs a strategy that brings together the economic and political aspects of it strategic thinking. In rejecting the RCEP, New Delhi seems to be signalling that despite the costs, China's rise has to be tackled both politically and economically.



## AYODHYA VERDICT: A CLOSURE WITH SEVERAL NEW PATHWAYS FOR FUTURE

*(written by Purti)*

Several decades of smouldering angst and communal upsurge finally came to a halt on 10<sup>th</sup> November 2019, with the decision of Supreme Court of India on the Ayodhya land dispute. Years of tussle over the land based on religious grounds which attracted a huge amount of political attention, exploitation of public sentiment and vigorous faith for propaganda building and a vote extracting mechanism eventually seems to settle with varied opinions in the end, but a decision binding over by the highest judicial body of the country.

The process and responsibility of such a vulnerable and volatile aspect is not an easy one to be dealt with but based on the facts, history, legality of actions in the past, and consequences of the decision, it comes down to the ownership of 2.77 acres of land to the trust to be formed by the government in order to construct the temple, and a separate 5 acres of land to the Muslim community for construction of a mosque. This is not by an act of obeisance towards Ram Lalla (the deity) or in other words, by submission to the faith of Hindus but by an interesting balancing of principles of establishing title.



The Court held that the right to the inner courtyard of the mosque, claimed by Muslims, has been periodically claimed by the Hindus. On the other hand, Muslims had themselves admitted that Lord Ram was born in Ayodhya and the chabutra in the outer courtyard was undisputedly in the possession of Hindus for decades and puja was conducted uninterrupted. The present decision, undoubtedly made very thoughtfully by the Court, was made possible by the conduct of the Muslim side over the decades. Be that as it may, ultimately the Court made a delicate balancing effort of subscribing to legal principles and putting a closure on a festering civilisational wound. Muslims, who had all along committed themselves to acceptance of the Court verdict, now have a chance to show grace, generosity and reaching out to claim a place in contribution to true national

integration and unity. The Court was also clear that the ASI report showing evidence of previous civilisations did not prove that a temple, least of all a Ram temple, was demolished to construct the Babri Masjid. The decision also said that the demolition of Babri Masjid in the year 1992 was illegal, but that falls under the civil laws and not under criminal lawsuit. And that, the Allahabad high court judgement in 2010 was wrong in the equal division of land in 3 parts.



In the course of the Ayodhya movement, faith and religiosity got replaced with pride and identity. This allowed the homogenisation of the Hindu community, and it then turned into a bigger question of 'identity' instead of just title or ownership of the land. This goes deeper into the concept of religion and the ways it is perceived in, by the diverse communities and the numerous people residing under it, and which was a perfect example of the integration of political ideas on religious grounds.

The reactions to the decision have widely been mild with a general sense of relief, including equally the disappointments and dissatisfaction from people which is both justified and important.

We are perhaps left with some dilemmas, because several years of efforts to find a solution without the involvement of judiciary and highest level of the same have been majorly unsuccessful, can we all do it ourselves when the cost of infuriation is so high?

If the loss of a mosque is preservation of faith, if the establishment of a temple is emancipation of faith, we can all join together in celebrating faith in the Constitution, and co-operate our larger objective of peace.

Hence the most crucial question: Will this ruling bring a closure? Such a closure does not merely mean stoppage of further litigation over Ayodhya. That too might not happen, though it should. But a closure on tagging sites across India and seeking their liberation? Will there be a closure on community stance used as both, a tool and a victim?

The **Centre of Policy Research and Governance (CPRG)**, India strongly believes that in the 21st century an India deprived of gainful opportunities, necessary for the flourishing of a young and emergent India, will prove to be an impediment in the development of human capital and preservation of global security. CPRG thus works • towards providing gainful opportunities in an effort to promote the involvement of young people in policy making and politics.



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