Gaza and Haiti on the brink of famine

Why in news?

Gaza and Haiti are facing imminent famine due to severe hunger caused by conflict and crisis.

What is the status of food security in Gaza and Haiti?

- **Gaza food crisis-** It is due to ongoing war between Israel and Hamas in Gaza, nearly every resident is struggling for food, with half the population facing severe hunger soon.

- As per report from the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), famine could strike Gaza between mid-March and May if hostilities continue and essential supplies are not provided.
- **Haiti food insecurity**- It is due to the crisis caused by criminal gangs, approximately 1.4 million people are on the brink of famine, with over 4 million in need of food assistance.

- United Nations warns Haiti as catastrophic hunger has been recorded for first time.

Operation Indravati was launched by India to evacuate its citizens stranded in war-torn Haiti

What is famine?

- Famine occurs when a country has such a severe food shortage that its population faces acute malnutrition, starvation, or death.
- **Classification-** It is decided using a UN scale called the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC).
- **Five tier scale-** The IPC utilizes a five-tier scale to assess food access and hunger levels.

- **Famine-** It is the *highest phase* (Phase 5), is declared when an entire population or subgroup faces absolute food inaccessibility, leading to potential short-term death.
- **Criteria for famine**- To officially declare as famine 3 things need to happen in a specific geographic area

    - At least 20% of households face an extreme lack of food
    - At least 30% of children suffer acute malnutrition
    - Two adults or four children per 10,000 people die each day "due to outright starvation or to the interaction of malnutrition and disease".
- **Famine declaration**- A declaration of famine would be made by top United Nations officials based on the IPC criteria.
- **Risk of famine**- Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Pakistan, Somalia, Syria and Yemen are at the risk of famine.

Famine was previously declared by IPC in Somalia (2011) and South Sudan (2017)

Factors of famine
• **Hunger**- It is described as the sensation when the body needs food, it becomes a concern when people lack access to adequate nutrition over time. • **Malnutrition-** It is a medical condition from not receiving proper calories, leading to health issues. • Severe acute malnutrition is critical, especially in children. • **Starvation-** It refers to extreme suffering or death due to no food intake, leading to the body consuming its own resources, ultimately causing organ failure and death without intervention. • **Vulnerable population-** Children younger than 5, pregnant and breastfeeding women, the elderly and people with underlying health conditions are most at risk from malnutrition. • In acute crises like that seen in Gaza, malnutrition affects the youngest children first.

What are the common causes of famine?

- **Conflict**- It often leads to population displacements and disrupts people's traditional ways of dealing with food scarcity.
- **Natural hazards**- Events such as drought, flooding, and cyclones, as well as human and animal diseases and crop pests, affect food access and availability.
- **Decline in economy**- It greatly impacts access to food, through disruptions to food trade, food price inflation, and currency volatilities.
- **Human epidemics**- Diseases such as measles outbreaks present a major challenge to food security and nutrition.
- **Animal diseases**- It can also affect the food availability of households whose livelihoods depend on their livestock.
- **Pests**- Desert Locusts or Fall Army Worm, can devastate crops and cause higher levels of acute food insecurity.
- **Inadequate humanitarian response**-When a shock occurs, and the humanitarian response is not sufficient, well-coordinated, or fast enough, the affected populations can only cope for a short period

What lies ahead?

- Famine declaration by UN officials carries no binding obligations on UN members or states,

- The famine declaration serves to focus global attention on the problem.

Quick facts

Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
• **Launch year**- In 2004 during Somalia's famine by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization's Food Security Analysis Unit (FSAU) • IPC is a coalition of 15 global organizations and charities. • **About**-It is an innovative multi-partner initiative for improving food security and nutrition analysis and decision-making. • It is a standardised scale that integrates food security, nutrition and livelihood information into a statement about the nature and severity of a crisis and implications for strategic response

References

1. Indian Express- Gaza and Haiti on the brink of famine
2. BBC- Famine in Gaza and Sudan

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