India-Afghanistan Embassy Issue

Why in news?

Despite Afghanistan's announcement of closing the Embassy of Afghanistan in Delhi, India has said that the Afghan embassy in New Delhi continues to function.

What is the issue?

- The diplomats at the embassy appointed by the previous Afghan government had announced in an earlier statement that the mission is *ceasing its operations from October 1*.
- The Afghan consulates in Mumbai and Hyderabad have, however, said that they would continue their operations.

Reasons

- **Lack of support**- They cited lack of cooperation from the India which hindered its abilities to carry out duties effectively.
- **Operational hurdles-** Afghan cited significant reduction in both personnel and resources available to it, making it increasingly challenging to continue operations.
- **Visa renewal-** It cited the lack of timely and sufficient support as reason from visa renewal for diplomats to other critical areas of cooperation,
- **Issue of flag-** The embassy has urged the Indian government to fly the tricolour flag of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan over embassy premises as it represents the democratic government of Afghanistan, which was overthrown by the Taliban regime.
- **Exception**- Emergency consular services to continue for Afghan citizens till the transfer of the custodial authority of the mission to the host country.
- **Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations**- Article 45 tells that all property and facilities of the Embassy will be transferred to the custodial authority of the host country.
- Hence, they have asked India to hand over the mission to a "legitimate government" of Afghanistan.
- **Diplomatic tightrope walk**- India has a technical team in Kabul, where it is coordinating with the Taliban regime for delivery of humanitarian aid, the Taliban would now want to post their representative in Delhi.
- Since *India has not recognised the Taliban regime*, it will have to diplomatically negotiate the next steps.

What is the history of India Afghanistan Relations?

- **Political ties**- India was the only South Asian country to recognise the Soviet backed Afghanistan in 1980s
- **Strategic Partnership Agreement**- It was signed in 2012 which provides for

assistance to help rebuild Afghanistan's infrastructure and institutions, education.

- **Commercial relations-** India has been a natural trading partner for Afghanistan and is the largest market in South Asia for its products.
    - The total bilateral trade between India and Afghanistan for 2019-20 was at US 1.5 billion dollars.
- **Connectivity-**
    - The Afghan government in collaboration with Government of India launched a dedicated Air Freight Corridor on 2017.
    - Road connectivity to Band-e-Amir in Bamyan Province promotes tourism.
    - In 2019, Afghanistan shipped around 700 tons of agricultural and mineral products to India through the *Chabahar Port,* clearly demonstrating the feasibility of Chabahar Port as a transit point for Afghanistan and eventually to Central Asia.
- **New development partnership-** US 1 billion dollars development assistance announced by Government of India to identify priorities and projects where Afghanistan needed India’s assistance.
- **Development projects-**
    - Constructions of *Afghan-India Friendship Dam (Salma dam), Shahtoot Dam*
    - Afghan Parliament, Water supply for Charikar City
    - Low cost housing for returning Afghan refugees in Nangarhar Province to assist in their resettlement
- **Cultural relations-**
    - **India- Afghanistan Foundation (IAF)** - It was established in 2007 as a trust fund which finances projects fostering India-Afghanistan relations through enhancement of economic, scientific, educational, technical and cultural cooperation.
    - **India-Afghanistan Culture Week** - It was held in New Delhi in 2017 in collaboration with India-Afghanistan Foundation (IAF) and ICCR.
- **Sports cooperation**-
    - **Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB)** - It has been alloted three cricket home grounds in India (Noida, Dehradun and Lucknow).
    - **Subroto Cup International Tournament**- It was organised every year by the India Air Force in which Afghanistan participates.
- **Human Resource Development**
    - Since 2005, India and Afghanistan have partnered in the area of community development through the *High Impact Community Development Projects (HICDP)* program.
    - Afghanistan National Agricultural Sciences and Technology University (ANASTU) was established with India’s assistance.
- **Humanitarian Assistance**-
    - Food security- In 2018 India has distributed 2000 tonnes of pulses to drought hit Afghanistan in 2018.
    - A Medical Diagnostic Centre in Kabul was set up in 2015.
    - COVID 19- Emergency assistance was provided by India.

Quick facts

Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations
• **About**- It is an international treaty that defines a framework for diplomatic relations between independent countries. • **Year**- 1961 • **Aim-** To facilitate " development of friendly relations" among governments through a uniform set of practices and principles. • **Diplomatic immunity**- The diplomatic missions are granted privileges that enable diplomats to perform their functions without fear of coercion or harassment by the host country. • **Member countries**- 193 countries. • **India-** It signed and ratified the convention in 1965. It enacted Diplomatic Relations (Vienna Convention) Act , 1972 to give effect to the convention. • **Non-members**- - Palau - South Sudan - UN observer states- Holy See and Palestine

References

1. The Hindu- Shutdown of Afghan embassy in Delhi
2. Ministry of External Affairs- India and Afghanistan relations

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