

India-Afghanistan Relation

Why in news?

Reports suggest that Prime Minister Narendra Modi may allow a new envoy for India's embassy in Afghanistan.

Who are Taliban?

- **Origins (1990s)** - They are founded in 1994 composed of Pashtun Islamic students and ex-mujahideen, emerged during the Afghan Civil War after the Soviet withdrawal (1989).
- **Rise to Power (1994-1996)** - They seized Kabul in 1996, overthrowing Burhanuddin Rabbani and established the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.
- **Rule (1996-2001)** - They imposed strict Sharia law and banned music, TV, and women's education.
- **Al-Qaeda attack on US** - Sep 11, 2001 attacks in the U.S. by Al-Qaeda, killed nearly 3,000 people.
- **US intervention** - Al-Qaeda's leader Bin Laden was in Afghanistan, under the protection of the Taliban who refused to hand him over.
- **Overthrow of Taliban** - The US intervened militarily and US-backed forces in the north swept into Kabul and removed Taliban from power in 2004.
- NATO allies had joined the US and a new Afghan government took over in 2004.
- **Doha Agreement (2020)** - The United States-Taliban deal, the Agreement for Bringing Peace to Afghanistan brought an end to the 2001-2021 war in Afghanistan and Taliban returned to power in 2021.

What is the status of India Afghanistan relation?

- **India- Afghanistan Relations** - India and Afghanistan share a deep-rooted relationship built on historical and cultural ties.
- **Strategic Partnership Agreement** - It was signed in October 2011 facilitating assistance to help rebuild Afghanistan's infrastructure and institutions, education and technical assistance.
- **Commercial Relation** - India is Afghanistan's largest trade partner in South Asia, with bilateral trade reaching USD 1.5 billion in 2019-20.
- **Chabahar Port** - Iran's only oceanic port, provides strategic direct trade route between India and Afghanistan, bypassing Pakistan.
- **Salma Dam** - India helped Afghanistan in building the Salma dam, known as Afghan-India Friendship Dam in 2016.
- **Cultural Relations** - India-Afghanistan Culture Week (2017), musical troupe visits, and instrumental performances fostered people-to-people ties.

- **India-Afghanistan Foundation (IAF)** - Established in 2007, IAF funds projects in economic, educational, technical, and cultural cooperation.
- **Sports Cooperation** - India and Afghanistan have robust relations in the field of sports.
- **Cricket**- Cricket has been a major factor in promoting people-to-people ties between the two countries.
- The Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB) uses Noida, Dehradun, and Lucknow as home grounds.
- India also supported the construction of a cricket stadium in Afghanistan.
- **Football**- Since 2011, Afghan youth teams have participated in India's Subroto Cup International Tournament.
- **Scholarships & Training**—Over 3,500 Afghan students receive training in India annually, and more than 15,000 study on a self-financed basis.
- **Educational Initiatives**- India has assisted in establishing institutions like the Afghanistan National Agricultural Sciences and Technology University (ANASTU) and has provided technical training in sectors such as agriculture and mining.
- **Humanitarian Assistance** - India has provided significant humanitarian aid to Afghanistan during COVID 19 and other political crisis times.
- **Community Development** - Since 2005, India and Afghanistan have partnered in the area of community development through the High Impact Community Development Projects (HICDP).
- **Indian Diaspora in Afghanistan** - Approximately 1,710 Indians currently reside in Afghanistan, engaged in banking, IT, construction, healthcare, NGOs, security, and academia.

What are the challenges in India - Afghanistan relation?

- **Pakistan Factor** - Transit restrictions through Pakistan have posed challenges in accessing the Afghanistan.
- **Influence of China** - China has already accepted Taliban credentials and invested in infrastructure projects in Afghanistan and integrate into its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

China has become the first country to name a new ambassador to Afghanistan since the Taliban retook power in 2021.

- **Terrorism Risk** - Activities of terrorist groups like the Islamic State (IS), has increased in Afghanistan.
- The Taliban has been accused of supporting the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), which has carried out deadly attacks on Pakistan's military.
- **Human Rights Issue** - Taliban administration has faced international criticism for human rights violations, curtailing women's rights and freedom of expression.

What lied ahead?

- Given Afghanistan's history of instability and India's past experience with terrorism, the risks of engagement remain high.
- India has begun to engage with the Taliban through high-level meetings, such as the recent discussions between Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri and Taliban officials.
- India shall work together with other like-minded states so that a regional framework for engaging with the Taliban regime can be worked out.
- India can influence the Taliban through its soft diplomacy to respect international human rights laws.

References

1. [The Hindu | India -Afghanistan](#)
2. [Embassy of India | Afghanistan](#)

