Taliban's War on Women

Why in news?

The Taliban's announcement of ban on female students studying in universities has attracted worldwide condemnation.

What is the Taliban's ban about?

- The Taliban's orders include
  - Banning Afghan schoolgirls from studying above grade six
  - Job restrictions
  - Ban on women at gyms and public parks
  - Public floggings for women travelling without male relatives accompanying them
- The Taliban first slapped a ban on girls attending secondary schools temporarily in 2021, citing cultural and budgetary constraints, lack of resources, lack of infrastructure, lack of teachers, etc.
- Under the present ban, primary and elementary schools will remain open while secondary education is banned for girl students.
- Women teachers have been banned from working.
- In most government offices, women employees had already been asked to take a pay cut and show up once a week to mark attendance.
- The invisibilisation of women by Taliban is now gaining momentum.

> *The ban makes Afghanistan the **only country** in the world where girls and women are denied access to education.*

What is the response of the international community?

- Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Pakistan that recognised the 1996-2001 Taliban regime (not this time) have condemned the ban.
- Turkey, Qatar, and Indonesia have also questioned the ban.
- Some countries have said it is against Islam to deny women education.
- The chair of the G7 foreign ministers warned that the Taliban's gender persecution may amount to a crime against humanity under the **Rome Statute**, to which Afghanistan is a State Party.
- India reiterated its commitment to an inclusive that respects the rights of all Afghans and ensures equal rights of women to participate in all aspects of Afghan society, including access to higher education.
- Given the nature of the choice between starving Afghans and punishing the Taliban, the international community faces limitations.
- Some 15 countries, including India, China, Russia, Pakistan, have been engaging with

the Taliban but no country has granted recognition to the Taliban.

The Rome Statute

- The Rome Statute laid the foundation for the establishment of International Criminal Court in 2002.
- Its purpose is to investigate and prosecute war criminals.
- India is not a party to the Rome Statute.

What does the Taliban need?

- The Taliban is in need of international recognition, but they have shown that they won't fulfill the conditions for it.
- They hope to benefit from geopolitical rivalries and the race among regional powers for influence in Afghanistan.

What lies ahead?

- **International community** - The international community especially India may curtail engagement with the Taliban, which depends on external assistance to run its government structures.
- Leading nations should create platforms outside Afghanistan for non-Taliban Afghan leaders, particularly women who had been elected in the past, to organise and voice an alternative vision.
- **India** - New Delhi's decision to cancel all visas to Afghans hurt female students seeking an education in India the most.
- India, as a regional leader, must review its "hands-off" approach to the people of Afghanistan who have clearly suffered many deprivations in the past year.

References

1. The Indian Express | Taliban's war on women
2. The Hindu | Ties with Taliban

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