Why Effort to help Afghanistan is Falling Short

Why in news?

The grim situation in Afghanistan is getting worse with the fall of the US-backed government and the Taliban takeover.

What is the issue?

- Aid groups and international agencies estimate about 23 million people, more than half the country, face severe hunger and nearly 9 million are on the brink of starvation.
- People have resorted to selling possessions to buy food, burning furniture for warmth and even selling their children.
- The US government has announced 308 million dollar in humanitarian aid to Afghanistan and is working with the UN and organisations such as the World Bank to provide additional help.

How did conditions in Afghanistan get so bad so fast?

- **Poor employment**- Even before the Taliban takeover in August, more than half the people were surviving on less than 2 dollar a day.
- Most government employees had not been paid.
- Since then, about half a million Afghans have lost their jobs, including many women pushed out of the workforce by the Taliban.
- **Withdrawal of US**- The withdrawal of the US meant an end to the military and other support that made up about half of the economy.
- **Economic crisis**- About 80% of the entire budget of the US-backed Afghan government came from international donor funds.
- Afghans can get only limited amounts of money because of a currency shortage.
- Those living abroad are having trouble sending help to family back in Afghanistan, because banks are reluctant to do business in a country whose leaders are under US sanctions.
- **Pandemic-** The effects of the Covid-19 pandemic aggravated the situation.
- More than half of all children under 5 were expected to face acute malnutrition, according to the UN.
- **Drought**- The country was suffering through a prolonged drought where agriculture makes up 25% of GDP.

What has the US done so far to help?

- **Humanitarian assistance**- The US is the largest provider of humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan and is contributing to a UN effort to raise more than 5 billion dollars.
- President Joe Biden said the US would continue to provide humanitarian aid to Afghanistan which was set in motion after a peace deal signed with the Taliban under President Donald Trump.
- **Sanctions-** But the US has not recognised the new government or lifted sanctions on the Taliban which created a perception that sending money or doing business in Afghanistan is off-

limits.

- There is nearly 7 billion dollar in Afghan funds at the Federal Reserve Bank in New York that have been frozen since the Taliban takeover.
- **Talks-** The Taliban and Western diplomats have started their first official talks in Europe since the Taliban took over control of Afghanistan.

Reference

1. https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-effort-help-afghanistan-falling-short-7739806/

