



India's Assistance to Afghanistan

Why in News

Recently, at the **Afghanistan 2020 Conference**, India has announced about 150 projects worth USD 80 million.

- Afghanistan's President, officials from the **United Nations** (UN) and the **European Union** (EU) officials, besides representatives of other countries, attended the conference.
- Also, the **USA has decided to reduce its troop presence** in Afghanistan to about 2,500 by **January 2021**.

Key Points

▪ India's Current Assistance:

- India will launch **phase-IV of high-impact community development projects**, which include around **150 projects worth USD 80 million**.
- It has signed an agreement for building the **Shahtoot dam**, which would provide **safe drinking water** to 2 million residents of Kabul city.
 - It builds on the 202 km **Pul-e-Khumri transmission line of 2009**, through which India provides power to the city.

▪ Earlier Assistance:

- India's development programmes in Afghanistan are focused around **five pillars**:
 - Large infrastructure projects.
 - Human resource development and capacity building.
 - Humanitarian assistance.
 - High-impact community development projects.
 - Enhancing trade and investment through air and land connectivity.
- **Since 2001**, India has committed **USD 3 billion** towards rebuilding and reconstruction of Afghanistan.
 - During the **Taliban years from 1996 to 2001**, India did not invest in



Afghanistan. //

- **Chabahar Port** in Iran, which provides **alternate connectivity to Afghanistan**.
 - Afghanistan's growth has been constrained by its landlocked geography and Pakistan blocking transit access made the situation even worse.
- **Pandemic Support:** India sent more than 20 tonnes of **medicines, other equipment and transported 75,000 tonnes of wheat** to Afghanistan to address the **Covid-19** challenge.
- **Shift in Indian Perspective:**
 - The Indian government's decision to invest in Afghanistan's future, where the Taliban is set to play a dominant role, is being seen as a **major departure from the past**.
 - **India also participated in the commencement ceremony of the intra-Afghan talks in Doha in September 2020**, where a 21-member Taliban team was also present. It **reflects India's realisation of ground realities and shifting sands in Kabul's power structure**.
- **Reduction of Troops by USA:**
 - In **February 2020**, the **USA and the Taliban signed an agreement** in Doha, (Qatar's capital).
 - According to it, the **USA would withdraw all of its troops from Afghanistan in 14 months** and would also **release Taliban prisoners**, held captive by the Afghan government.
 - In return, the **Taliban assured** that they would **not allow** transnational jihadist organisations such as **al-Qaeda** and the **Islamic State** to **use Afghanistan as their base** and also **committed to start direct talks with the Afghan government**, which began in September 2020.
 - With the **USA leaving at such a crucial point**, it **not only deprives Afghan forces of the support they need**, particularly the **airpower**, but also **affects their morale**.
 - The **North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)** has **committed to funding Afghan troops for four more years**.
 - However, this decision **will leave Afghanistan with an uncertain future** as the **Taliban is expected to take over** after the troops' withdrawal.
 - The Taliban, who were **ousted from power in 2001 after the USA invasion**, have since been fighting both foreign troops and the Afghan government.
 - It now controls more than half of the country and contests the whole of it.

- Since the agreement was signed, the Taliban have **conducted more than 13,000 attacks** nationwide.
- According to a **UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan** (UMAMA) report in October 2020, nearly **6,000 Afghan civilians were killed** in the first nine months of the year and **45% of the deaths were by the Taliban**.

Way Forward

- The increasing level of violence in Afghanistan is a pressing concern. However, in **spite of the challenges, both sides** (the government representatives and the Taliban) **remain at the negotiating table**, and appear to have reached an early breakthrough.
- India calls for an immediate and comprehensive ceasefire and also believes that the **peace process** must be Afghan-led, Afghan-owned and Afghan-controlled.
- India looks forward to walking hand in hand with the people of Afghanistan and the world community to work towards a peaceful, prosperous, sovereign, democratic and united Afghanistan.

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