

INDIA'S INITIATIVE TO OPEN DIPLOMATIC CHANNEL WITH AFGHANISTAN



Issue

India has made its intention clear of opening a diplomatic channel with Taliban-ruled Afghanistan by sending the first consignment of medicines to the country.

Background

India had taken a political decision to differentiate between the Taliban regime and the people of Afghanistan.

Details

The essential supplies will be provided to Afghanistan through the United Nations and its agencies. Medicines will be sent via World Health Organization and food grains through World Food Programme.

Efforts in reaching out to Afghanistan

- Taliban tightly controls access to UN agencies and it took India over four months to carefully engage with Taliban officials in calibrated, back-door conversations
- India was among the last regional players to engage with Taliban diplomatically when the envoy to Qatar met senior Taliban official.

Taliban's response

- Taliban has said that India is welcome to participate when it comes to humanitarian assistance and development projects.

- Taliban has praised India's projects that were carried out at the tune of \$3 billion in the last 20 years, as extremely productive for the country.

Key challenge

- The question of engaging with Taliban-ruled Afghanistan without compromising on India's red lines is the key challenge.
- Prime Minister Modi has flagged concerns that the change of power has not been inclusive and took place without negotiations.
- In response, Taliban have not reacted critically of the statements made by Indian PM. It had stated that help from the neighbors was welcome.
- Providing e-visas to Afghans; maintenance of Indian-built projects like the Salma Dam or the Pul-e-Khumri power plant and other infrastructure is also a challenge.

India's initiatives

- India hosted the regional security dialogue of the National Security Advisors and officials from eight countries including Russia and Iran.
- India also decided to send 50,000 metric tons of wheat to Afghanistan through Pakistan's territory. A request was made to Pakistan to facilitate the movement.
- Pakistan was forced to allow this to take place after India asked Taliban to request their friends in Pakistani establishment.

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