



EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

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Shutdown of the Afghan Embassy

Syllabus: GS2/Agreements Involving India &/or Affecting India's Interests

In Context

- Recently the embassy of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan announced its closure in New Delhi.

About the Afghanistan's embassy in India

- **Taliban's military campaign & takeover:**
 - The embassy represented the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan that was deposed through a military campaign by the Taliban on August 15, 2021.
 - The Taliban fighters who **quickly took over all the major cities and infrastructure** of the country, as the U.S. forces carried out a messy withdrawal, were **not recognised by India** as de facto rulers.
- **Embassy's "stateless mission":**
 - With the displacement of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, the embassy of Afghanistan in New Delhi had begun to work as a "stateless mission" **as it did not represent the current rulers of Kabul**, that is the Taliban, with whom India has no diplomatic relationship.
 - In effect, the embassy of Afghanistan was performing a **ceremonial or a symbolic role** because of the lack of diplomatic relations between the two countries.
 - The major role was to help out Afghan citizens and travellers in India deal with the difficulties they have been facing.
 - The mission had stopped representing an active state since August 2021 and was working as a coordinating agency.

Afghanistan's outlook

- The Embassy of Afghanistan blamed multiple factors like
 - Lack of cooperation from the Government of India.
 - Lack of resources to operate any further.
 - There had been a significant reduction in personnel.

- Furthermore, the **embassy has urged the Indian government to fly the flag of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan** over embassy premises.
- It has also asked New Delhi to hand over **the mission to a “legitimate government”** of Afghanistan sometime in the future.

Outcomes of the move & India Afghanistan relations

- **About:**
 - Despite the closure of the embassy in Delhi, India and Afghanistan are continuing engagement with each other.
- **Engagements with Taliban:**
 - India has not recognised the Taliban formally but **Indian diplomats have been engaged with the Taliban** since the immediate aftermath of the fall of Kabul in August 2021.
 - Indian diplomats have met the **Taliban’s representatives in multiple locations** under multilateral initiatives like the **recent Moscow format dialogue**.
 - In September, India sent a **representative to Kazan, Tatarstan** in Russia to engage with the Taliban under the **Moscow format dialogue**.
- **Afghan consulates in India:**
 - Afghanistan has traditionally maintained an embassy in Delhi and two consulates in **Hyderabad and Mumbai**.
 - The consulates in Hyderabad and Mumbai have **not shut down** even after the embassy’s announcement to close down.
 - According to the Consul General of Afghanistan (Islamic Republic), the consulate will continue to function for thousands of **Afghan students, refugees and traders**.
- **India in Afghanistan:**
 - India has been maintaining a “technical team” in Kabul where the staff provides visas to Afghan traders and travellers to India.
- **Exchange of goods & people:**
 - There are two weekly flights that carry Afghan citizens and items to India. India uses the flights while sending humanitarian assistance to the Afghan people.
 - That apart, some Indian goods are also entering Afghanistan through other countries like Iran and the UAE.

Challenges

- **Informal relations:**
 - The current relations is indicative of the informal nature of the relationship as formal diplomatic ties are unable to take off, because India refuses to recognise Taliban citing human rights abuses by the regime.
- **Pressure to recognise Taliban Rule:**

- Taliban is quickly gaining international recognition from rival powers like China which sent a new ambassador to Kabul in September.
- With Iran, Pakistan, the UAE, Russia, Qatar and China warming ties with the Taliban, there is obvious pressure on India to reconsider its position on the Taliban.
- **Taliban's economic needs:**
 - The Taliban has been urging India to support it with its economic revitalisation through projects like electricity generation and road building works.
 - India, however, has not yet indicated that it will review its position on the Taliban.

India's Interests in Afghanistan & way ahead

- The embassy of Afghanistan in Delhi is one of the oldest diplomatic addresses in the capital and **India has never allowed the Taliban to operate from that address**, even when it governed Afghanistan **from 1996 to 2001**.
- India, owing to its **strategic location** straddling **Pakistan and Iran** and other **Central Asian Republics (CARs)**, has had a keen perception of the threat of terrorism emanating from the region.
- As a **contiguous neighbour and long-standing partner of Afghanistan**, and given strong **historical and civilisational linkages** to the Afghan people, India has direct stakes in ensuring the return of peace and stability to the country.
 - The interests of the Afghan people will always continue to be at the core of all efforts.
- A **broad based, inclusive, and representative formation** is necessary for long-term peace and stability in Afghanistan.

Daily Mains Question

[Q] Is Afghanistan's closure of the Embassy in India a turning point for Afghanistan-India relations? What are the implications of the move?