

Afghanistan-India New Development Partnership

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The New Development Partnership of Afghanistan and India under the Strategic Partnership Agreement (SPA) signed in 2017 to the tune of \$1 billion, in which India took up hundreds of development projects in Afghanistan in areas including agriculture, water, education, health, etc. The New Development Partnership gives an assurance of India's continued support for a peaceful, united, stable, prosperous and inclusive Afghanistan.

In news: Signing ceremony of MoU for the construction of the Lalandar [Shatoot] Dam in Afghanistan

Placing it in syllabus: Foreign Affairs

Dimensions

- New Development Partnership and its components
- Its significance
- Brief History of India- Afghanistan Relationship

Content:

New Development Partnership and its components:

- India has played a significant role in the reconstruction and rehabilitation process in Afghanistan.
- India's extensive developmental assistance programme, which now stands at around US 2 billion, is a strong signal of its abiding commitment to peace, stability and prosperity in Afghanistan.
- India has opted to pursue a 'soft power' strategy to engage Afghanistan, preferring to contribute substantially in the civilian sector rather than in

defence and security.

- India is particularly active in the construction, infrastructure, human capital building and mining sectors. Besides, it has also identified the telecommunications, health, pharmaceuticals, and information technology and education sectors for cooperation.
- India fosters cooperation and collaborates on infrastructure and high impact community development projects in Afghanistan.

India's New Development Partnership is 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.

Important Infrastructure Projects

- Construction of a 218 km road from Zaranj to Delaram for facilitating movement of goods and services to the Iranian border;
- construction of 220kV DC transmission line from Pul-e-Khumri to Kabul and a 220/110/20 kV sub-station at Chimtala;
- upgrading of telephone exchanges in 11 provinces;
- expansion of national TV network by providing an uplink from Kabul and downlinks in all 34 provincial capitals for greater integration of the country.
- New Afghan Parliament building (inaugurated on 25 December 2015)
- Afghan-India Friendship Dam (Salma Dam) (opened on 4 June 2016)
- India has also committed to contribute substantially in

improving transportation system in Kabul and has decided to donate 1000 buses to Afghanistan along with upgradation related infrastructure.

As part of sustainable development of natural resources in Afghanistan:

- A consortium of public and private Indian companies has been formed to invest in Afghanistan's mining sector in the Hajigak iron ore reserves.
- Mines Institute is proposed to be established in Kabul with GoI technical & financial support to build capacity in mining area

In the area of skill development, GoI offers:

- training to Afghan officials/nationals in diverse fields through 500 ITEC slots and 25 slots under TCS Colombo plan are allocated annually to Afghanistan.
- Specialised ITEC courses are held for Afghan Government Officials on specific demand
- 614 ICAR scholarships under India-Afghanistan Fellowship Programme commenced in 2012-13 lasting up to 2020-21
- training via tele-education at ANASTU, Kandahar and Indira Gandhi Institute of Child Health, Kabul.
- ICCR scholarships to 1000 Afghans every year to pursue undergraduate courses in various Indian universities in major cities across India.

Its significance:

- India sees Afghanistan as a strategically important country.
- Afghanistan is its bordering neighbour, however the part which borders Afghanistan is occupied by Pakistan.
- Safeguarding a Taliban free Afghanistan is in interest of India which is one of the favourite target of cross border terrorism.

- Indians have made over \$2 billion of investment in Afghanistan mainly in mining, agriculture, energy, capacity building and infrastructure to make its place secured as a friendly nation.
- Its New Development partnership is also a way to counter Pakistani influence in Afghanistan.
- Just to make Afghanistan less dependent on Pakistan for access to the sea, India had been building a highway and rail link from Iranian ports to Afghanistan and Central Asia.
- India has been acting swift to prevent Pakistan from regaining Afghanistan as its backyard and making it a place to nourish extremism and drugs.
- India so far doesn't have any declared interest of forming military bases in Afghanistan.
- Although India has deployed soldiers of Indo Tibetan Border Police in Afghanistan to ensure safety of Indian diplomats and development work in Afghanistan a big military presence in the land locked country in the future may help India to contain its childhood rival.
- 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.
- The External Affairs Ministers have reiterated that India supports all efforts for peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan which are inclusive and Afghan-led, Afghan-owned and Afghan-controlled.

Lalandar [Shatoot] Dam

- In Feb 2021, Memorandum of Understanding [MoU] was signed for the construction of the Lalandar [Shatoot] Dam in Afghanistan.
- The Lalandar [Shatoot] Dam would meet the safe drinking water needs of Kabul City, provide irrigation water to

nearby areas, rehabilitate the existing irrigation and drainage network, aid in flood protection and management efforts in the area, and also provide electricity to the region.

- This is the second major dam being built by India in Afghanistan, after the India- Afghanistan Friendship Dam [Salma Dam], which was inaugurated by the Prime Minister and the President in June 2016.

Brief History of India- Afghanistan Relationship:

- The bilateral relations between Afghanistan and India, which have remained strong and friendly over the decades.
- India and Afghanistan have been historical neighbours, and share cultural ties.
- India was the only South Asian country to recognize the Soviet-backed Democratic Republic of Afghanistan in the 1980s, though relations were diminished during the 1990s Afghan civil war and the Taliban government.
- Following the withdrawal of the Soviet armed forces from Afghanistan in 1989, India continued to support Najibullah's government with humanitarian aid.
- After its fall, India together with the international community supported the coalition government that took control, but relations and contacts ended with the outbreak of another civil war, which brought to power the Taliban, an Islamist militia supported by Pakistan.
- The Taliban regime was recognized only by Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).
- The destruction of the Bamiyan Buddha monuments by the Taliban led to outrage and angry protests by India.
- Similarly the Taliban's move in 2001 to require Afghan Hindus to wear identification patches, reminiscent of Nazi policies, was heavily criticised by India.
- In 1999, the hijacked Indian Airlines Flight 814 landed and stayed in Kandahar in Afghanistan and the Taliban

were suspected of supporting them.

- India became one of the key supporters of the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance.
- India aided the overthrow of the Taliban and became the largest regional provider of humanitarian and reconstruction aid to the present day Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.
- During the U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan in 2001, India offered intelligence and other forms of support for the Coalition forces.
- After the overthrow of the Taliban, India established diplomatic relations with the newly established democratic government, provided aid and participated in the reconstruction efforts.

Mould your thought: Write a short note on India's role in the reconstruction and rehabilitation process in Afghanistan.

Approach to the answer:

- Introduction
- Write about Post Taliban Era Development
- Discuss India's New Development Partnership
- Discuss the significance of this partnership
- Conclusion