

## **INDIA -AFGHANISTAN RELATIONS**

NEWS: India is gradually deepening its engagement with the **Taliban regime in Afghanistan**, marked by recent developments, including the **possibility of Afghanistan appointing a new envoy to its embassy in New Delhi**.

### **WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?**

#### **Origin and Rise of the Taliban (1994-2001)**

##### **1. Formation and Early Growth:**

- The Taliban was formed in **1994** in **Kandahar, Afghanistan**, by **Mullah Mohammad Omar** and a group of **religious students (Talibs)**.
- It emerged during a period of **civil war and instability** after the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan in **1989**.

##### **2. Rapid Expansion and Governance:**

- By **1996**, the Taliban controlled nearly **90% of Afghanistan**, establishing the **Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan**.
- The regime enforced a strict interpretation of **Sharia law**, imposing severe restrictions on **women's rights, media, and cultural expression**.

##### **3. International Standing and Recognition:**

- The Taliban was **internationally isolated**, with only **Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE** recognizing its government.
- The regime provided sanctuary to **Osama bin Laden and Al-Qaeda**, which led to global criticism.

##### **4. Fall from Power:**

- After the **9/11 attacks in 2001**, the US-led coalition **invaded Afghanistan**, overthrowing the Taliban regime.
- The Taliban retreated to rural strongholds and **launched an insurgency** against the new Afghan government and NATO forces.

#### **Taliban's Insurgency and Return to Power (2001-2021)**

##### **1. Twenty-Year Insurgency:**

- Following its ouster, the Taliban waged a **guerrilla war** against **NATO and Afghan forces** for two decades.
- It used **safe havens in Pakistan**, rural insurgency, and targeted attacks to destabilize the Afghan government.

##### **2. US-Taliban Doha Agreement (2020):**

- In **February 2020**, the **US signed a peace agreement** with the Taliban in **Doha, Qatar**.

- The agreement led to the withdrawal of **US and NATO forces**, conditional on Taliban assurances regarding counterterrorism measures.

### 3. **Taliban's Return to Power (2021):**

- By **August 15, 2021**, the Taliban swiftly regained control of **Afghanistan**, taking Kabul with little resistance.
- The **Islamic Emirate was reestablished**, and a new government was formed, dominated by senior Taliban leaders.

## **Recent Shifts in India's Engagement with the Taliban**

### **Pragmatic Approach**

- India has adopted a **pragmatic approach**, engaging with the Taliban **without formally recognizing its government**.
- The focus is on **national security, trade, and humanitarian assistance** rather than political endorsement.
- The Taliban has requested India to **resume development projects**, particularly in **healthcare and refugee rehabilitation**.

### **Humanitarian Assistance**

- India has provided **substantial humanitarian aid**, including:
  - **50,000 metric tons of wheat** to alleviate food shortages.
  - **Medicines and vaccines** to support Afghanistan's healthcare system.

### **Trade and Connectivity**

- India considers **Chabahar Port (Iran)** a critical gateway for **Indo-Afghan trade**, bypassing Pakistan.
- The **Zaranj-Delaram Highway**, built by India, enhances connectivity to **Central Asia**.

### **Security Concerns**

- India prioritizes **preventing Afghan soil** from being used by **terrorist groups** like:
  - **Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT)**
  - **Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM)**
  - **Islamic State-Khorasan Province (ISKP)**
- The Taliban has **offered assurances** to India regarding security threats.

### **Taliban's Strategic Autonomy**

- The Taliban seeks to **diversify its foreign relations** and **reduce dependence on Pakistan**.
- It views India as a **potential regional partner** for **economic recovery and development**.



## Reasons Behind India's Decision to Engage the Taliban

### Strategic Location

- Afghanistan acts as a **gateway to energy-rich Central Asia**.
- India leverages **Chabahar Port** to avoid dependence on **Pakistan-controlled routes**.

### Regional Security

- India's engagement aims to **counter terrorism threats** and **prevent Afghanistan from becoming a terror hub**.

### Economic Opportunities

- Afghanistan possesses **vast mineral wealth**, presenting **investment opportunities** for India.

### Cultural and Historical Ties

- India and Afghanistan share deep **civilizational and historical ties**, dating back to the **Indus Valley Civilization**.

- The **Bamiyan Buddhas** and **Gandhara region** symbolize ancient cultural exchanges.

### **Geopolitical Considerations**

- **Pakistan-Taliban tensions** create an opportunity for India to engage diplomatically.
- **Iran's domestic focus** has reduced its Afghan influence, allowing India to step in.
- **Russia's evolving ties with the Taliban** due to its involvement in **Ukraine** provide a changing dynamic.
- **China's growing influence** via the **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)** has strategic implications.
- Possible shifts in **US policy under a second Trump administration** could alter regional dynamics.

### **Implications of India Engaging with the Taliban**

#### **Positive Implications**

1. **Enhancing Regional Stability:**
  - India can influence **peace-building efforts**, counter **terrorism**, and **balance China-Pakistan influence**.
2. **Advancing India's Act West Policy:**
  - Strengthens India's **westward geopolitical strategy**, promoting connectivity with **Central Asia**.
3. **Preserving India's Investments:**
  - Protects India's **\$3 billion infrastructure projects**, including **Salma Dam and Zaranj-Delaram Highway**.
4. **Boosting Trade and Connectivity:**
  - Promotes trade via **Chabahar Port**, reducing dependency on Pakistan-controlled transit routes.
5. **Counter-Terrorism Collaboration:**
  - Engaging with the Taliban allows India to **secure assurances** against terror groups targeting Indian interests.
6. **Enhancing Humanitarian Diplomacy:**
  - India strengthens goodwill by providing **food aid, medicines, and vaccines** to the Afghan population.

#### **Negative Implications**

1. **Legitimizing the Taliban Regime:**
  - Engagement risks indirectly **legitimizing a government** accused of **human rights violations**.

## 2. Security Risks and Terrorism Threats:

- Taliban's ties with **extremist elements** may continue to pose threats to **Indian interests**.

## 3. Straining Relations with Western Allies:

- India's engagement with the Taliban could be viewed negatively by **Western nations** concerned about **human rights**.

## 4. Complications with Pakistan:

- India's increasing engagement with the Taliban may **antagonize Pakistan**, potentially worsening tensions.

## 5. Unpredictable Taliban Policies:

- Internal divisions within the Taliban **increase uncertainty** for India's investments and security interests.

## 6. Direct Security Threats to India:

- **Terror attacks on Indian assets**, such as the **December 2023 Jalalabad consulate attack**, highlight risks.

## Challenges in India-Taliban Relations

### 1. Terrorism Threats:

- Groups like **LeT, JeM, and ISKP** continue to pose **significant security risks** for India.

### 2. Pakistan's Influence Over the Taliban:

- The **Haqqani Network** and Pakistani military support for certain Taliban factions complicate India's strategic interests.

### 3. Human Rights and Governance Issues:

- Taliban's **lack of inclusive governance** and **human rights abuses** create ethical dilemmas for India.

### 4. China's Expanding Influence:

- China's **economic investments in Afghan resources** via **BRI projects** threaten India's economic engagement.

### 5. Trade and Connectivity Barriers:

- Pakistan's refusal to allow **India-Afghanistan transit trade** limits direct trade relations.

## The Way Forward for India-Taliban Relations

1. **Maintain Diplomatic Engagement** without formal recognition.

2. **Expand Humanitarian Aid** in healthcare, education, and food security.
3. **Strengthen Regional Partnerships** with Iran, Russia, and Central Asia to counterbalance China's influence.
4. **Secure Indian Investments** and promote **Chabahar Port** for trade.
5. **Advocate for Inclusive Governance** cautiously to protect minorities and women's rights.
6. **Enhance Counter-Terrorism Cooperation** to prevent Afghanistan from becoming a terror safe haven.

## Conclusion

- India's engagement with the Taliban is a **strategic balancing act**, ensuring **security, economic interests, and humanitarian aid** while avoiding **unintended legitimization of the regime**.

## Rashtriya Gokul Mission (RGM)

### Introduction

- The **Rashtriya Gokul Mission (RGM)** was launched in **December 2014** under the **National Programme for Bovine Breeding and Dairy Development (NPBBD)**.
- It aims at the **development and conservation of indigenous bovine breeds** across India.
- The mission focuses on **enhancing milk productivity, improving breed quality, and ensuring sustainable dairy farming** through advanced reproductive technologies.

### Objectives of Rashtriya Gokul Mission

- **Enhancing Productivity:** Increase milk production and improve genetic potential in a sustainable manner using modern breeding techniques.
- **Breeding Improvement:** Promote the use of **high genetic merit (HGM) bulls** for artificial insemination (AI) to improve breed quality.
- **Wider AI Coverage:** Strengthen the artificial insemination network and ensure AI services reach farmers at their doorstep.
- **Conservation of Indigenous Breeds:** Encourage the **scientific and holistic rearing** of indigenous cattle and buffalo breeds to maintain genetic diversity.

## **Revised Rashtriya Gokul Mission (2021-22 to 2025-26)**

- Under the **15th Finance Commission period (2021-26)**, the mission's budget allocation has been **increased by ₹1,000 crore**, bringing the total to **₹3,400 crore**.
- The revised RGM continues the mission's objectives while introducing **two key initiatives** to further support farmers and indigenous breed conservation.

### **Two Key New Initiatives**

#### **1. Heifer Rearing Centres:**

- **30 Heifer Rearing Centres** are being established across India, aiming to rear **15,000 heifers** in total.
- Farmers receive a **one-time assistance of 35% of the capital cost** to set up these centers, ensuring better breed management and calf care.

#### **2. Interest Subvention for Farmers:**

- A **3% interest subsidy** is provided on loans for purchasing **HGM (High Genetic Merit) IVF heifers**.
- This initiative encourages farmers to invest in superior **high-yielding dairy breeds**, boosting overall productivity.



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# RASHTRIYA GOKUL MISSION

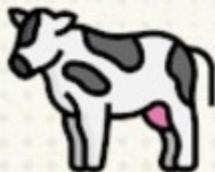
## Objectives



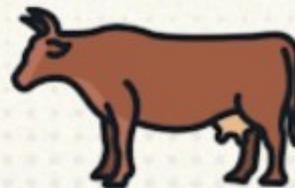
Enhance bovines' productivity & increase milk production



Promote breeding of high genetic merit bulls



Strengthen Artificial Insemination coverage



Promote conservation of indigenous bovines

### Achievements & Benefits of RGM So Far

- **Increase in Milk Production:**
  - India's total **milk production increased by 63.55%** over the past ten years.
  - Per capita milk availability rose from **307 grams/day (2013-14) to 471 grams/day (2023-24)**.
- **Nationwide Artificial Insemination Programme (NAIP):**
  - Covered **8.39 crore animals**, improving breeding efficiency and genetic quality.
  - Directly benefited **5.21 crore farmers**, providing better access to AI services.
- **Establishment of IVF Labs:**

- A total of **22 IVF laboratories** have been set up to advance cattle breeding technologies.
- These facilities have successfully **produced 2,541 HGM calves**, enhancing the genetic potential of indigenous breeds.

### Promotion of Indigenous Technologies

- **Gau Chip & Mahish Chip:**
  - Developed by the **National Dairy Development Board (NDDB)** and **ICAR-NBAGR** for genomic selection and tracking of indigenous cattle and buffalo breeds.
- **Gau Sort (Indigenous Sex-Sorted Semen Technology):**
  - Developed by **NDDB**, this technology ensures a **higher probability of female calf births**, contributing to better breed management and increased milk production.

### Conclusion

- The **Rashtriya Gokul Mission** plays a crucial role in enhancing **India's dairy sector**, promoting **scientific breeding**, and **conserving indigenous bovine breeds**.
- With **increased financial support, AI coverage, and advanced reproductive technologies**, RGM is ensuring **sustainable and high-yielding dairy farming** in India.
- The introduction of **heifer rearing centers, interest subvention, and genomic innovations** further strengthens **India's position as the world's largest milk producer** while improving the livelihoods of millions of dairy farmers.

What is the Issue With Rashtriya Gokul Mission?

- **Prominence of Gir Cow in Rashtriya Gokul Mission:**
  - **India's Rashtriya Gokul Mission, established in 2014**, initially designed to research and develop high-quality semen for various indigenous bovine varieties, the mission has primarily focused on Gir cows and not much on other breeds.
    - This preference for Gir cows **stems from their milk production and adaptability to different regions.**
- **Impact on Livestock Numbers:**
  - **The 2019 livestock census showed a 70% increase in purebred Gir cows since 2013.** In contrast, other indigenous breeds like Sahiwal and Haryana have not experienced similar growth, with some even witnessing a decline in numbers.

- This trend raises concerns about the **loss of diversity in indigenous cattle breeds in India.**

What are the Issues with Indigenous Gir Cow Breed?

- **Inconsistent Performance of Graded Gir Cows:**

- Contrary to the growing obsession with Gir cows, research reveals that graded Gir cows (**a crossbreed between Gir and other nondescript varieties**) **do not consistently outperform indigenous breeds in many states.**
  - For example, **in Haryana, there is no evidence of increased milk production in graded Gir cows.**
  - East Rajasthan has reported lower milk production in graded Gir cows compared to indigenous varieties, leading to farmer complaints about shorter lactation periods and reduced daily milk yields.
  - However, in west Rajasthan, graded Gir cows perform better due to favorable climatic conditions.

- **Factors Beyond Adaptation to Microclimates:**

- The performance of graded Gir cows is **influenced by factors beyond their adaptability to microclimatic conditions.** For instance, Gir cows thrive in herds, and their milk production decreases when raised in isolation.
  - Without adequate resources and support, **these cows can become a liability for farmers. This was evident in a previous case in Vidarbha.**

Source: <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2112789>