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US Halted Funding WHO

Why in news?

US President halted its funds to the World Health Organization (WHO), saying it mismanaged the spread.

Will there be any impact due to this halt?

- The US contributes almost 15% of the WHO's total funding and almost 31% of the member states' donations.
- The halt of this fund comes when the global caseload of COVID-19 approaches 2 million, with the most cases in the US.
- For the WHO, the loss of about 15% of its total funding is bound to have an impact the world over.
- However, unless other countries do the same as the US, the move may not severely restrict the WHO operations.

From where does WHO get its funds?

- There are 4 kinds of contributions that make up funding for the WHO.
- **Assessed contributions** are the dues countries pay in order to be a member of the Organization.
- **Voluntary contributions** come from Member States (in addition to their assessed contribution) or from other partners.
- **Core voluntary contributions** allow less well-funded activities to benefit from a better flow of resources.
- **PIP Contributions** Pandemic Influenza Preparedness Contributions was started in 2011.
- It will improve and strengthen the sharing of influenza viruses with human pandemic potential.
- In recent years, assessed contributions to the WHO have declined, and now account for less than one-fourth of its funding.
- Voluntary contributions make up for most of the remaining funding.

What does the WHO do with its funds?

- The WHO is involved in various programmes.
- In 2018-19, 19.36% was spent on polio eradication, 4.36% on prevention and control of outbreaks, etc.
- WHO South East Asia Region (including India) received \$375 mn.
- The Americas received \$62.2 mn for WHO projects.
- That is where most of WHO funding comes from and the least of it goes.

How does WHO prioritise spending?

- The Annual Programme of Work is passed by the World Health Assembly (WHA), the WHO's decision-making body.
- Delegates from all member states attend the WHA, held annually.
- It focuses on a specific health agenda prepared by the Executive Board.
- The main functions of the Assembly are to determine the WHO policies and supervise financial policies.
- It also reviews and approves the proposed programme budget.
- The decision on which country gets how much depends on the situation in the countries.

How involved is WHO in India?

- India became a party to the WHO Constitution on January 12, 1948.
- In 1948, the first session of the WHO Regional Committee for South-East Asia was held in the office of India's Health Minister.
- The Health Ministry and the WHO India country office developed the WHO India Country Cooperation Strategy (CCS) 2019-2023 jointly.
- One of the CCS's priorities is to enhance India's global health leadership.
- On the ground, the WHO has been a key partner in the immunisation and nutrition programmes, tackling neglected diseases, etc.
- However, the credit for the success of a programme is always of the country; the WHO plays a supportive role.

How WHO and India worked together in the COVID-19 pandemic?

- The WHO has been working closely with Health Ministry and various state governments on preparedness and response measures for Covid-19.
- However, India has largely built its own strategy.
- It is reluctant to test broadly for COVID-19; it has imposed early travel restrictions to and from China and then the lockdown.
- While India imposed a lockdown when cases were just 341 (March 22), its resistance to mass testing is akin to the US's strategy.
- India has also taken a call on universal use of masks when the WHO maintained that masks are not mandatory.

What is the criticism the WHO faces from various countries?

- When most countries closed down air travel at the first stage, the WHO took a long time stand against travel and trade restrictions on China.
- On January 30, the International Health Regulations (2005) Emergency Committee urged countries to be prepared.
- However, the Committee does not recommend any travel or trade restriction based on the current information available.
- In January, the cases were piling up in China.
- During this time, in a Delhi meeting, the WHO officials brushed aside government concern of human-to-human transmission.

Source: The Indian Express



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