



# India and Pakistan Special Envoys Participate in Talks with Taliban

**Prelims:** [Oslo accords](#), West Bank, Gaza Strip

**Mains:** India-Afghanistan relations: Significance and Way Forward.

## Why in News?

Recently, Taliban representatives met Indian and Pakistani special envoys amongst a number of international diplomats, in an effort by the Norwegian Government to break the impasse in talks on the sidelines of a peace conference in Oslo.

## What are Oslo Accords?

- The [Oslo Accords](#) are a pair of agreements between **Israel** and the **Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)** that marked the start of the Oslo process, a peace process aimed at resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
- The Oslo process began after secret negotiations in Oslo, Norway, resulting in both the recognition of Israel by the PLO and the recognition by Israel of the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people and as a partner in bilateral negotiations.
- **Oslo I Accords (1993):**
  - Signed in Washington, D.C
  - Established a framework for interim self-government arrangements for the Palestinians in the [West Bank and Gaza Strip](#) and set a timetable for further negotiations.
- **Oslo II Accords (1995):**
  - The Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip commonly known as Oslo II.

## What is the significance of Afghanistan for India?

- **Gateway to the Central Asia:** Afghanistan is a gateway to the [Central Asian Republics \(CARs\)](#), which are rich in natural resources and potential markets for Indian goods and services.
- **Counterbalance to Pakistan and China:** A stable and friendly Afghanistan can help India contain the threats of terrorism, extremism and radicalism emanating from Pakistan.
- **Partner in India's Soft Power assistance:** India has invested over \$3 billion in various projects in Afghanistan, such as roads, dams, schools, hospitals, parliament building, etc.
  - India also provides scholarships, training, cultural exchanges and humanitarian aid to Afghanistan.
- **Cultural & Historical ties:** The two countries share a common heritage of Buddhism, Hinduism, Sufism and the Mughal empire. Many Afghan leaders, including former President Hamid Karzai, have studied in India.

## How has the Taliban takeover affected India's interests?

- **Security Risks:**
  - The Taliban is seen as a proxy for Pakistan and a supporter of anti-India terrorist groups like Jaish-e-Muhammad and Lashkar-e-Taiba.
  - The Taliban is also close to China, which is India's strategic rival in the region.
- **Influence and Leverage:**
  - India had no direct engagement with the Taliban and had invested heavily in the previous government and its institutions.
  - India also lost its access to the Central Asian Republics through Afghanistan, which was a key part of its connectivity and energy projects.
- **Trade and Development:**
  - The Taliban has stopped the movement of cargo through Pakistan and created uncertainty over the future of India's aid and projects in Afghanistan.
  - India had contributed over \$3 billion in various sectors such as infrastructure, health, education, agriculture, etc. in Afghanistan.
- **Humanitarian Crisis:**
  - Thousands of Afghans who have worked with India or have family ties with India are seeking refuge and protection from the Taliban's repression.
  - India has launched an evacuation mission called [Operation Devi Shakti](#) to bring back its citizens and Afghan partners from Kabul.

## How should India handle the situation?

- **Maintain a Balanced Approach:** India should adopt a balanced approach in its dealings with Afghanistan, avoiding excessive alignment or confrontation. While **expressing concerns about human rights, terrorism, and the treatment of minorities**,
  - India can also explore areas of common interest such as trade, cultural exchange, and regional connectivity.
- **Support Afghan Reconciliation:** India can **actively support efforts for an inclusive and representative government** in Afghanistan. This involves advocating for an inclusive political process that accommodates the interests of all ethnic and religious groups in the country.
- **Engage with Regional Players:** India should engage with regional players, particularly neighbouring countries, to coordinate their efforts and ensure a collective approach to stability in Afghanistan.
  - This can involve collaborating with countries such as Iran, Russia, and Central Asian nations to address common concerns and promote stability in the region.
- **Focus on Development Assistance:** India has been a significant contributor to Afghanistan's development, providing infrastructure projects, education, and humanitarian aid.
  - Despite the Taliban takeover, India could continue supporting development initiatives that benefit the Afghan people directly, such as infrastructure development, healthcare, education, and capacity building.
- **Strengthen International Partnerships:** India should work closely with international partners, including the United States, European Union, United Nations, and regional organizations like the [South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation \(SAARC\)](#), to collectively address the evolving situation in Afghanistan. Collaborative efforts can help shape a more stable and secure environment in the country.

[Source: TH](#)